

Magazine Articles on the William Desmond Taylor Murder

This is a selection of pictorial magazine articles published from the 1930's to the 1950's pertaining to the 1922 murder of silent film director William Desmond Taylor. These articles contain factual errors and should not be considered authoritative.

WHO KILLED

What is the inside of the mysterious murder of the famous director? Who wrote him passionate love notes? Where did Sands go after looting Taylor's apartment? What enemy of his adventurous past could wish him dead? The murderer, although known, was never tried for the foul crime!



THE MURDERED DIRECTOR

William Desmond Taylor in the uniform he wore as an officer in the British army in the world war, victim of one of the most baffling mysteries of all time.

WHO killed William Desmond Taylor? To the world at large this is probably the most baffling question that ever has arisen in connection with a murder case.

But that secret is known—and perhaps by more persons than ever before knew any secret of similar importance.

It was known almost from the first by at least one of the men who has been in charge of the district attorney's office in the nine years since the famous motion picture director was found dead beside the desk in his living room in the exclusive Alvarado court apartments.

It was known by Detective Earl Boruff of Long Beach who was found murdered in October, 1929, and who at the time of the crime was a representative of the department of justice.

It is known by Detective Ed C. King and Captain Jesse Winn who has worked with him for years on the case.

It is known by Henry Peavey, the negro manservant who found the body on that fateful morning of February 2, 1922. It is known by Edward Sands, Taylor's secretary, who has never been found since the night of the murder.

And it is known by the murderer herself. For it was a woman who killed Desmond Taylor and the motive was one that has never been hinted at in the published accounts of the crime. She is not a motion picture actress. She did not kill Taylor because she loved him or because he had loved or ceased to love her. It was for a different sort of love that this woman killed and for protection of one who loved him.

She was never accused and never questioned for the single reason that her plea would have been justifiable homicide and a most astounding scandal in Hollywood would have rocked the motion picture business to its very foundations.

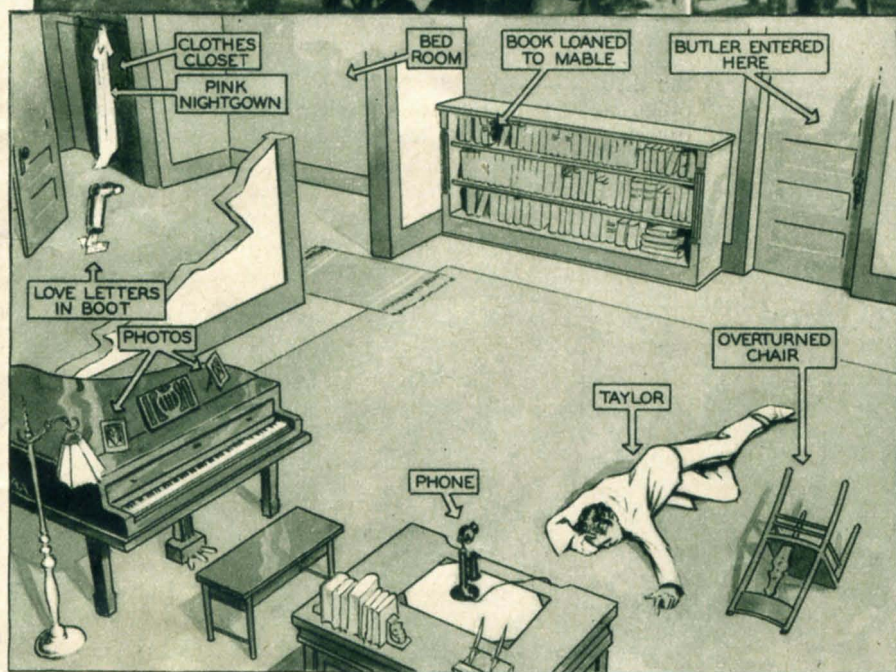
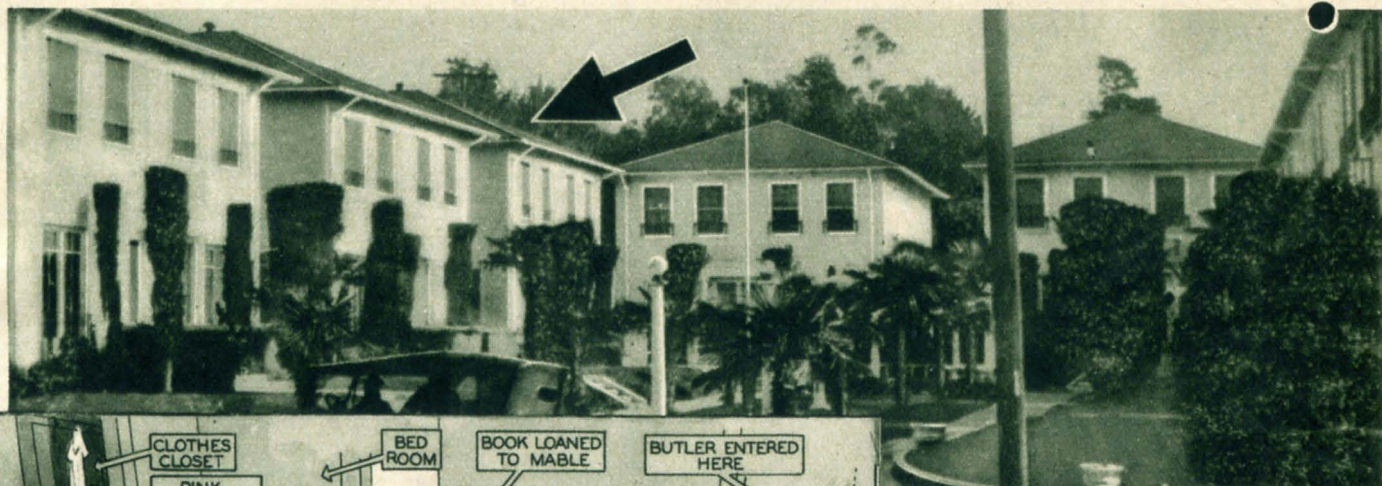
It is probable that Mabel Normand knew the truth about the case and the name of this woman though she had no hand whatever in the crime or in the events leading up to it.

It is more than likely that Mary Miles Minter, wherever she is today, knows as much as Miss Normand knew, though it was clear from the first that she did not kill the man she so frankly admitted she loved with the passionate devotion of the minor child she then was, though she was at the time probably the highest paid screen actress in the world.

The former governor of California, Friend W. Richard-

William Desmond Taylor?

By RICHARD FILLMORE



The third home from the left was Taylor's, the scene of the amazing crime that shocked the nation and frightened Hollywood.

Diagram shows the details of the ghastly scene of the mystery of the murdered director.

son, once declared flatly that he knew who did the killing but it has since been made entirely clear that the woman who had been named to him by a man who confessed his knowledge of the case, was not the actual slayer.

A Ghastly Mystery

IT WAS about 7 o'clock on the morning of February 2, 1922, that the quiet of Alvarado court was shattered by the screams of a man.

Those who looked out, alarmed by the sound, saw Henry Peavey, Taylor's manservant, standing at the doorstep of the ground-floor apartment, staring through the door which he had just opened.

The man's shrieks caused someone to call the police and as a crowd gathered and surged into the house, two police detectives arrived.

They found the body of William Desmond Taylor lying between the desk at which he had apparently been sitting and an overturned chair.

"Looks like heart failure," someone said as the detectives drove the crowd out of the house. But when a friend of Taylor's, summoned by the swiftly spreading news, stooped to lift the body in the presence of the detectives it was found that a pool of blood had spread beneath it and that death had been due to a wound in the back.

The homicide squad was summoned. The premises were carefully examined but the surging crowd that had moved

into the room before the police arrived had obliterated most of the possible clues.

The apartment was found to consist of a large living room and four smaller ones. Two of the rooms were on the second floor. The living room where the body was found was rich in appearance and its furnishings reflected the artistic taste of Taylor who had been not only a great motion picture director, but at one time a dealer in art objects.

The principal pieces of furniture in this room were a baby grand piano and a small roll-top desk.

From the walls looked down the photographs of many motion picture actors and actresses whom Taylor had directed and who had autographed the pictures with terms



Mabel Normand, at the height of her career as a comedienne enjoyed cycling as a pastime. She was with Taylor a few moments before his murder.

Beautiful Mary Miles Minter, whose autographed picture adorned Taylor's piano. A minor, though a star, she was madly infatuated with the famous director.



of respect or endearment that spoke well for the character of the man. Further evidence of his character was given by the great number and the type of books which seemed to be everywhere in the room and the war relics which spoke of overseas service.

With the arrival of the coroner it was announced that Taylor had been killed by a single bullet which entered low in his back and coursed through his body to lodge in the muscles between the left shoulder and breast.

The case seemed well on a way to solution or at least to explanation when it was found that the bullet hole in the back of the coat seemed lower than the wound in the body, indicating that Taylor had been standing with his arms held high when he was shot down.

Examination of the room and of the contents of his pockets, however, indicated that, if robbery was the motive and Taylor had been shot in a holdup, the murder had so alarmed the robbers that they had taken nothing.

A diamond ring and platinum watch had been left undisturbed as had also some \$78 which he carried in his pockets. Some significance was at first attached to the fact that the director's checkbook was lying on the desk. But an examination of one of the drawers and the tracing of a telephone call soon revealed that Taylor had been working on his income tax report, and had lately called a friend for some information about the income tax law.

Scene Reconstructed

THE detectives then quickly reconstructed the scene, determining that Taylor had been shot while seated at his desk with his arms forward bringing his coat upward on his back. It was apparent that he had started up from his chair, had fallen and overturned another chair that gave the appearance of a struggle to the scene.

While there were some who said Taylor had grabbed the chair to ward off his assailant and others who maintained that he had been killed during a quarrel, it is now fairly well established that Taylor was shot without warning from behind as he sat going over his check stubs and that he was probably one of the few directly connected with the case who never knew the identity of the murderer.

When the detectives had gone over the scene of the crime for any evidence that might make clearer what had happened in the room, they mounted the stairs to the second floor. There they got a surprise.

It was evident the instant they stepped into Taylor's bedroom that it had been rifled. Yet there were trinkets lying about that would have been snatched up by any robber. Something else had been the object of the search and it was presently plain from the places that had been emptied that letters had been taken away.

Taylor's friend later told the officers that he had removed the letters and some other belongings while it was still believed the director was a victim of heart failure and that it had been done to protect his reputation and those of many women who had written to him. These papers he admitted he had destroyed

But there are many who believe that the papers were taken by the murderer and that, hidden in them, was the secret of the crime.

In a riding boot in a downstairs closet other letters were found, also in the desk and in the house. Among them were the warm love epistles of Mary Miles Minter, the child actress who was just growing up and who made no secret whatever then or later of her strong affection for the great man. A woman's nightgown was also found in the ground floor rooms.

On questioning the neighbors, it was found that the great comedy star, Mabel Normand, was probably the last person to have seen the murder victim before his life was snuffed out. Taylor's native courtesy served to exonerate her, even after his death, of any actual connection with the crime. For it was quickly found that Taylor had seen Miss Normand to her car as she left after making a short call the evening before.

Miss Normand arrived on the scene close on the heels of other friends who had been shocked beyond measure by the story of the director's death. She found that Mary Miles Minter had preceded her in a frenzy of grief.

Mabel was surprised to learn that Miss Minter had told the officers of a secret engagement of Mabel and Bill Taylor. She denied the engagement but admitted a very warm regard for Taylor as a man and as a director and admitted that she had visited him the evening before.

The story she told was clear and concise. It described how she had left the downtown district of Los Angeles about 6:00 o'clock, had visited her safety deposit box in a nearby bank and had there called her home on the telephone. She found that Taylor had left a call for her, saying he had a book for her, and she ordered her chauffeur to drive her to Taylor's residence.

On the way she stopped to buy a Police Gazette and some other magazines and a package of peanuts which she munched in the car and which she still carried in her hand when she was admitted at Taylor's home.

Asking the chauffeur to wait, she went into the apartment. Taylor was talking on the telephone, making some inquiries about the income tax requirements. Mabel Normand waited until the conversation was over and then cheerfully offered Taylor a handful of the peanuts she was still munching.

They talked for some time about the book which he gave her. He asked her if she had had dinner but she said her dinner was waiting for her at home and Taylor dismissed his manservant, releasing him for the night.

Taylor then walked with his guest to the car, handed her into it after speaking to the chauffeur and stood at the curb as the car drove away.

This story was corroborated in every possible detail by the chauffeur who told of speaking to Henry Peavy as the servant left the place and who described the brief conversation at the car door as

Taylor bade his guest what was to prove a last goodbye.

Peavey, the servant, later described a quarrel between Taylor and a motion picture actress which he interrupted to ask if he would be wanted again that night. This actress could have been no other than Mabel Normand and yet there was no evidence given by anyone else that there had been any quarrel and Peavey himself did not mention it at the coroner's inquest.

Initialed Handkerchiefs

THE neighborhood was immediately canvassed for persons who might have seen the murderer enter or leave the house. Mr. and Mrs. Douglas McLean told of hearing what was probably the murder shot and Mrs. McLean described a "funny-looking" man she saw back out of the front door as though talking to Taylor inside the door and move off in leisurely fashion.

A chauffeur whom Taylor had lately employed said afterward he believed he was the man Mrs. McLean saw but asserted that the door had been locked, that he had not seen Taylor, and that he had left Taylor's car in the garage and gone away for the night. Yet there is some evidence that Mrs. McLean did not see the chauffeur whom she knew by sight and that the person she actually did see was a woman dressed in man's clothes and probably the actual murderer.

A handkerchief belonging to Mary Miles Minter and another bearing the initial S had been picked up at the scene and were turned over to the detectives.

They indicated that Miss Minter and probably Edward Sands had visited the director during the night. Yet there were some who said that the handkerchief with the initials "M. M. M." had been planted by another person and, though she was questioned on several occasions, there was never any direct evidence to connect the child actress with the murder.

Sands, on the other hand, has never been seen by anyone in authority, to be recognized, since the murder night.

A legend has grown up about him that is part truth and part fable. It is clear that he had known Taylor before his screen career began. He was trusted by Taylor beyond the ordinary relations of master and man.

He had been for some time a confidential secretary to the director. He had betrayed his trust and, while Taylor had made a trip to Europe, had forged checks and diverted funds to his own use to such an extent that Taylor had sworn out warrants for his arrest.

Sands had disappeared but was found to have visited Taylor afterward and was believed to have stolen some articles from the house during a burglary which was followed by the return of pawn tickets for the stolen articles which had been pawned in the name of William Deane-Tanner.

To the amazement of nearly everyone in Hollywood this was presently found

to have been the true name of William Desmond Taylor. Further investigation of Taylor's past revealed a strange and most surprising story.

Taylor was really William Cunningham Deane-Tanner. He had been born in Ireland in 1877 of good blood and breeding and he had been well educated. He had been attracted to the stage but on parental persuasion had entered the British army to be disqualified later for defective eyesight and sent to Kansas to take up life as a rancher.

There was an interlude of theatrical tramping and of adventure in Alaska during the gold rush. Then William Deane-Tanner married a member of the Floradora company and became the father of a baby girl. He was then established in New York as an art dealer and art expert. More or less associated with him had been a brother, Dennis Gage Deane-Tanner.

These two men had utterly disappeared from New York leaving families behind them. William left home in 1908 and Dennis disappeared four years later.

From that day to this Dennis Deane-Tanner has never been recognized or questioned by any of the officials who have kept an eye out for him.

William, however, had appeared in Hollywood, had been taken on as an actor and presently had become a director rising to a position of eminence under the name of William Desmond Taylor which he had sometimes used in his billing as an actor in road companies.

His wife had divorced him and married again. Whether she knew of his whereabouts or how long she remained in doubt of his identity, has never been made known, but in 1916, eight years after his disappearance, he had been recognized by his brother's wife and had been asked for help which he granted on behalf of herself and his brother's children.

During most of his successful years as a motion picture director he had sent his sister-in-law \$50 a month for the support of the deserted family.

More Baffling Clues

HARDLY had these facts been unearthed by the investigators of the Taylor case, when a letter was received from a man who had known William and Dennis Deane-Tanner and who declared that he recognized in Edward Sands, the missing secretary, the younger brother who had disappeared in 1912 and whose family Taylor had been supporting.

The letter received by Taylor shortly before his death and believed to be from Edward Sands, had enclosed pawn tickets in the correct name of Taylor and there was little doubt that Sands was Taylor's brother and that this fact accounted for the trust which Taylor had imposed in him.

A world-wide search was immediately started for Sands and has now been going on for nearly ten years but has produced no results. At one time a letter

was received by the district attorney of Los Angeles county offering to clear up the Taylor murder and purporting to come from Sands. It asked immunity from prosecution if Sands could show his innocence of the murder and this was granted in a letter published in Los Angeles newspapers, but Sands never appeared.

His failure to do so is taken by many of the officers and investigators who have worked on the case to indicate that Sands was in some doubt as to whether he could prove his innocence and that he decided to take no chances, though he undoubtedly holds a key to the solution of the crime.

The most astounding feature of the Taylor murder, however, is the fact that more than a dozen persons have at one time or another confessed being implicated in the crime without one of these ever actually being brought to book for it.

Every phase of Taylor's colorful life, moreover, seemed to suggest a theory and a possible motive and, when it became clear that the detectives were all but helpless before the baffling nature of the crime these theories and stories began to burst forth in extraordinary fashion.

At about that time rumors of dope traffic in Hollywood had lately gone the rounds and the story soon found currency that Taylor had been engaged in distributing narcotic drugs among the members of the film colony. This tale was not to die down for many months.

Presently, however, a federal district attorney in charge of drug prosecutions revealed the fact that Taylor had come to him for help in driving out a "drug ring" which was supplying narcotics to one of Taylor's friends. This story immediately gave rise to theories that Taylor had crossed his associates in the drug racket and had been put on the spot by those against whom he had given information. The name of a Chinese who was declared to have been the actual murderer was given to the police who found that the man had been in jail at the time of the crime.

A prisoner in one prison implicated himself in this drug ring and named the killer with such an air of confidence that Governor Richardson accepted the story and the man was given a parole. When he had made good outside the prison under a new name, this man finally admitted that his story was a fabrication.

A prisoner in Toledo named the "killer" and brought about an investigation that resulted not in a prosecution of the man named but in a sanity inquisition for the alleged informer who wound up in a sanitarium.

A Los Angeles drug addict was named by two different persons as having made suspicious statements but it was proved he could have had no hand in the crime. In one of the stories concerning him the drug ring motive was used. In another it was declared he had served in the company Taylor commanded overseas during the World War and had revenged himself for some

action of Taylor's against him in the course of military duty.

Two men in Folsom prison made statements about the crime, one of them admitting that he was dealing in drugs and declaring that the other was in on the racket and had slain the director. They implicated Sands as well as Taylor in the narcotic trade and declared that two movie stars had financed the murder but their stories were soon proved to be mere bids for a few weeks respite in the life sentences they were serving.

One of the men accused the other of the actual slaying and declared that the same man had also murdered Sands and disposed of the body. There were many other reports of what had happened to Sands and he was variously said to have committed suicide, to have been murdered, to be hiding out in a dozen more different parts of the world.

Then came the story of another man who said he had gone with Sands to Taylor's house on the night of the murder with a pack of narcotics, that Sands had gone into the house and then returned and hurried away with him reporting that he had found Taylor dead.

This yarn proved no more convincing than the others. There were stories of street car conductors who had seen the mysterious, "funny looking" man described by Mrs. McLean. There were anonymous letters confessing the crime and letters signed by a prominent Los Angeles business man's name purporting to reveal that he had killed the director for attentions to his wife. But these letters were found to have been written by someone else, apparently with a motive of revenge.

There was one letter from a man who declared he had hidden behind the piano and had witnessed the crime. Investigation had convinced the detectives, however, that there was no place of concealment in the room.

The murderer had either gone into the room and stood behind the door while Taylor returned from bidding goodbye to Mabel Normand or she had walked into the house openly just as Mabel did and before that lady arrived.

Investigators' Theory

A GENERAL impression among the investigators and the very positive conviction of at least one of them that a determined woman went to Taylor's home that afternoon to obtain some of the letters a friend afterwards admitted having destroyed.

It is the belief that she found the door open as Mabel Normand found it and walked in at a time when neither Taylor nor his manservant was aware of her presence.

Having come armed for the purpose of demanding the letters, she now saw what appeared to be a chance to take them and go away without being identified. She mounted the stairs and went through Taylor's bedroom.

Perhaps she found there what she was seeking together with more condemna-

tory evidence. Perhaps she heard or was a witness to the scene between the director and Miss Normand.

Intending to slip out while the director was still talking to Miss Normand after walking with her to her car, she may have been caught by Taylor's return and forced to conceal herself behind the open door.

It is apparent, if this is true, that what she had discovered in Taylor's apartment had filled her with such rage at his conduct that she covered him with the gun which she had brought with her and concealed in the folds of her coat or in its sleeve.

When Taylor sat down at his desk and calmly began to go over his accounts, this woman is believed to have vented what she believed to be a righteous hatred by firing the fatal shot.

There is more than a little cause to suspect that this woman may have been dressed in man's clothing at the time the crime was committed.

Knowing that Taylor was alone in the house at the time, she may have remained hidden in the place, she may have slipped out the rear door immediately, or she may have backed out the front door, drawn it carefully to behind her, thus leaving the house locked, and have been seen leaving the place by Mrs. McLean.

The woman suspected by the investigators is of a character and determination that make this reconstruction of the crime entirely logical. She is known to have had high political influence in Los Angeles and, while she has made her statements in connection with the crime and the rather remote association she had with Taylor, she has never been accused either officially or unofficially of participation in the actual shooting.

The motion picture industry at that time, having lately extricated itself from the reverberations of the Fatty Arbuckle case, was in no position to withstand another siege of unfavorable publicity such as the story of the murderer, if told on the witness stand, would have been likely to cause.

The company by which Taylor was employed was by no means less eager to avoid such complications than other companies and the industry presented a united front in endeavoring to keep the crime from reflecting on the character of any of its personnel.

In spite of the astounding revelations in connection with Taylor's dual life, it was still possible to represent him to the public as a man who had built greatness into a new identity after deserting his wife and child under his former name. One wild story circulated by the industry was definitely calculated to dramatize his earlier life.

It was to the effect that Taylor had been engaged to the daughter of an illustrious family in Ireland, that the sister of his fiancée was being blackmailed by a gambler and that this sister was caught by Taylor in the act of robbing her father's safe in order to meet the blackmailer's demands.

After pleading with the girl to return

the funds, the story went, Taylor and the girl were discovered before the looted safe by other members of his fiance's family. He at once assumed the blame for the crime and let it appear that his prospective sister-in-law had caught him at the safe door and had tried to talk him out of the robbery.

In spite of the secret pleas of the guilty girl that she be allowed to clear up the case, the story went on, Taylor or Deane-Tanner as he was then known, served a sentence in prison and then made a new start in America, having made the sacrifice of his reputation and his prospects for the sake of the sister of the girl he loved.

This story has all the ear-marks of the movie plot of its day and no evidence whatever has been found to sustain its credibility.

The Taylor case flares up occasionally in newspapers when some new confession or alleged solution of the crime is given to the world. It figured in political campaigns for a time until one district attorney of Los Angeles died, one went to jail and a third succeeded to the office.

And though it goes down officially in the history of crime as an unsolved mystery, there are few persons in Los Angeles county or elsewhere in the nation who do not believe that the slayer of William Cunningham Deane-Tanner, alias William Desmond Taylor, is known and could be apprehended if ever it became advisable or convenient.

The hunt for Edward Sands still goes on and the belief still holds that he is the brother of the dead man, Dennis Gage Deane-Tanner. His continued absence is

laid to the fact that he already has been found to have two desertion charges against him on the records of the United States Navy and that the charges of grand larceny brought by his brother, still stand.

It may be interesting in this connection to know that there has never been a murder indictment issued against Edward Sands in spite of his disappearance and that he was seen in Los Angeles after his dismissal by Taylor and after the issuance of the larceny warrants.

There is little doubt that he will read these words and that he will know, perhaps for the first time, that the Taylor murder case is not, for the officials at least, as dark a mystery as it has been pictured.

The Infamous Dr. Young Mystery

(Continued from page 41)

ing. It had been reported that a three-carat diamond ring had been seen in possession of the secretary since the disappearance of Mrs. Young. When questioned she confirmed the report by stating that sometime after Mrs. Young's leaving, the doctor had brought the ring to the office and had carelessly left it lying around in one of the desks. The girl had suggested to him one day that she be allowed to wear it just to tantalize her sweetheart, but had returned it to the doctor a short time afterwards.

Find Diamond Ring

THIS fact spurred the detectives to search further. At first Young denied any knowledge of having seen it since his wife's departure, but later upon searching his home on Kingsley Drive they found it in a cedar chest among Mrs. Young's belongings. Upon confronting him with this news Dr. Young said, "Oh yes, you see Mrs. Young was in the habit of putting her rings in the pocket of the automobile when we went out driving at night. She feared hold-ups and one day after she left I was cleaning out the car and found it in the pocket, but had forgotten all about it since."

As Hanson and I sat in my study, going over these facts, I asked him where the girl's mother was, and he stated that she would be waiting for us at Dr. Young's home, as her daughter was also there, probably being quizzed at that time. This was Friday, June 12, 1925.

We immediately went over to Dr. Young's house, which was about five blocks from where I live, and were met by Detective Charles Sprankling of the District Attorney's office, Young's attorney, Inspector Grant and other investigators.

The mother greeted me eagerly. Nervously twisting a small handkerchief in her fingers, she said: "Mr. Har-

ris, I first want to say that I believe that my little girl is innocent. Yet, something makes me fear that Dr. Young might exert some undue influence over her and may have caused her to hold back something. I think you will know if she is telling the truth, and that would be some relief to me, but still I just can't help fearing that she is holding something back that we all should know."



A detective examines the instrument with which it was believed Mrs. Young was gassed into unconsciousness.

Harris Meets Girl

ABOUT this time Mrs. Young's son, a light-hearted lad of eighteen, came into the room. I was impressed by the fact that he seemed less worried than all the rest. I accounted for this later when informed that Dr. Young had shown him a letter supposed to have been written by his mother. Also,

that Dr. Young had cultivated his friendship to such an extent that the youth idolized the doctor as though he were his own father. It was said that after his mother had married Dr. Young, the latter had always been most attentive to the wants of this young lad, who was heir to the million-dollar estate left him by his father, Patrick Grogan, the olive king of California.

I next met Dr. Young's secretary. It was the first time that I had ever seen her. The news pictures in the papers during the past four days hardly did her justice. She was a tall, slender girl, with dark brown eyes that seemed to twinkle a winning way the very minute that she was introduced.

Her first words to me after the introduction were, "Oh, Mr. Harris, you and Mr. Hanson must join us in a cup of coffee."

As we entered the well furnished dining room and took seats at the table beside the other officers I thought of the days, not so long ago, when Mrs. Young had held the position of hostess at this very table. I visualized as the woman poured the coffee, Mrs. Young performing this same task as she many times entertained friends of her husband. I wondered why some of the relatives of Mrs. Young; her mother, father or brother, were not present, as this was her own home and had been paid for from the money she had received from her first husband, Patrick Grogan. I later learned the reason.

Young's attorney was in full charge of affairs. Mr. Grant had been requested to guard the boy and to see that no harm came to him. I saw Grant step to the window several times and peer out into the darkness, as he explained he didn't know who might be prowling about the place. I heard him say, "Don't worry, Pat, if any of them try anything funny around here, they will bump into this," and he patted the gun at his waist.

During the luncheon that was served,

AS THE aftermath to each unsolved death mystery in Hollywood and its environs, and it seems that every few months a lethal incident arises where the police are unable to determine to an actual surety whether the deceased was a suicide or victim of an assassin, always arises the query:

"Who killed William Desmond Taylor?"

The mysterious demise of the famed voluptuary director fifteen years ago once again became the dinner table topic around festive boards in gay Hollywood following the flooding of California newspapers with details concerning the finding of the body of Reed Russell in a lawn swing at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gouverneur Morris in Manhattan Beach. The famous author is well known in Hollywood where many of his literary creations had been translated to the screen.

Found with a bullet through his head, the police after perfunctory examination rated it as suicide and considered the incident closed. Mrs. Victoria Russell, his mother, insisted that the case be reopened, expressing her belief that a murder had been committed, and the fact that one of the many conflicting reports was that Lila Lee's son had discovered the body gave the case added interest in the cinema capital.

Ballistics experts testified Russell, a young finance agent, could not have fired the fatal shot from the position in which the gun was found but finally the case was again written off as suicide.

To return to William Desmond Taylor.

This, Hollywood's greatest murder mystery, was exactly 15 years old on February 1, 1937, but inner circles of cinema center apparently will never permit it to lapse into the forgotten limbo. It is all too intriguing, with the flavor and savor of a Dashiell Hammett detective movie needing the cunning of a William Powell to unravel its tangled skeins.

If there was ever a glamour murder this was it, for it involved a high salaried, high powered director who would have ranked with D. W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille had he received one-millionth of the publicity before his demise, that he

was accorded as he lay on the slab in the morgue, later in his casket and for years afterward.

He led a life of mystery. None knew of his comings and goings, until the hand of a still undiscovered murderer struck him down. Then detectives, district attorneys and grand jury members, calling scores of witnesses, unearthed piece by piece evidence that suggested his love of fair women, his flair for the bizarre, his worship of the exotic. Hinted at were visits of beautiful phantoms to his luxurious apartments in the fashionable Wilshire district.

IT WILL go down in filmdom's history as one of the strangest cases ever to baffle the police—a case interwound with the hearts of Hollywood women, and shrouded by the very identity of the victim himself!

Fifteen years ago the noted early-day



William Desmond Taylor, in the large photo, was at the height of his romantic career when an assassin's bullet mowed him down. For years police have sought Edward Sands, his former valet, above

HOLLYWOOD'S GREATEST UNSOLVED MURDER!

Filmland was full of broken hearts the day William Desmond Taylor was found slain in his bachelor's quarters. Who killed him? Why? Police think they know the answer!

by Philip Marshall Connelly

film director was wantonly shot down in the soft-lighted study of his bachelor suite, by an unknown assassin . . . yet the Taylor case today is almost as widely discussed in Hollywood as it was in 1922 when it occurred.

It is fifteen years since the film capital was stunned by the revelations that followed in the wake of Taylor's untimely death . . . yet, for all intensive and extensive efforts of the police, the killer today goes unapprehended and unpunished.

Fifteen years since Taylor's romantic heart was stilled.

Fifteen years since merciless yet undeserved publicity sent two of Hollywood's most famous women stars into obscurity.

Fifteen long years . . . yet, in all that has transpired since Taylor died, little if any true evidence has been added to the sum total information possessed by investigators a week after the director's body was found by his Negro valet!

The headquarters men who worked on the case believe they KNOW who killed William Desmond Taylor, and they have a fairly good idea what the reasons were for his slaying.

They believe they know the TRUTH about the Taylor case; the truth which, over the years, has been confused and obscured by sensational revelations concerning Taylor's personal affairs, particularly his association with lovely women of the screen.

William Desmond Taylor, tall, handsome, cultured, reserved, grayhaired at 45 . . . a stand-out among his fellow men . . . a romantic figure among women . . . a man of many affairs of the heart—this was the man who, at the very pinnacle of his career, was chopped down by an assassin's bullet.

Henry Peavy, the ace director's Negro servant, reporting for duty the next morning, stumbled upon the prostrate form of his kindly master, sprawled on the floor of the living room of Taylor's bachelor suite in Alvarado Court, scarcely a block away from the idyllic peacefulness of beautiful Westlake Park. [Continued on page 92]



Mabel Normand's career came to a quick ending after the slaying of Taylor? Did she intend to marry him? Some thought so!



This was the Mary Miles Minter of 1922—a young actress who knew Taylor as a friend and gentleman. Her story startled police



Here is another photo of Miss Minters, this time a matured woman, saddened by the disappointing years which came her way

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AMERICAN DRUG AND CHEMICAL CO.
420 S. Sixth St., Minneapolis, Minn. Dept. 263

Hollywood's Greatest Unsolved Murder!

[Continued from page 39]

Peavy's frightened screams, ringing out in the morning air, brought other residents of the court hurrying to the two-story Taylor bungalow.

The first to arrive at Peavy's side was Edna Purviance, at that time Charlie Chaplin's leading woman. Close behind her came Douglas McLean, screen star of that day, and McLean's wife.

Soon a crowd had gathered, for this was a case destined to startle a nation. A doctor whose identity was never learned pushed his way forward, made a cursory examination and announced that the director had been dead for not less than ten hours. Stomach hemorrhage, the physician surmised, was the probable cause of death.

Taylor's corpse, however, was not moved until Central station detectives, accompanied by Charles Eyton, general manager of Famous Players Lasky studio, arrived on the scene.

EYTON, it was, who first made the amazing discovery that Taylor had been shot!

Placing his hand under the body to raise it, Eyton found a pool of blood on the floor, and stains on Taylor's coat collar at a point from which the bullet had emerged on the right side of the neck. The lone steel-jacketed missile had entered the left side of the director's body five inches below the shoulder.

The angle at which the bullet had entered the body made it next to impossible for Taylor to have shot himself. Detectives, closely examined the area about the wound, found no trace of powder burns, indicating the death weapon had been held at a distance, in the hands of another person. To further discredit a theory of suicide, there was no sign of a gun with which the director might have killed himself.

This was murder!

Police reserves, hurriedly called to the scene, cleared Alvarado Court of the morbidly curious. Homicide detectives commenced a systematic examination of everything about the Taylor home, both inside and out.

The dead director lay on his back, midway between his writing desk and the door that led from the living room onto the small porch.

On the writing desk was Taylor's open check book, and beside it his fountain pen with that top unscrewed, ready for use. On the desk also was a federal income tax blank, partly filled out. Its contents indicated that Taylor's income for the year of 1921 had been about \$40,000, big money indeed for those early days in Hollywood.

When the coroner arrived, a minute examination of the slain director's person and clothing was undertaken. From the pockets of his trousers \$78 in cash was removed by officers. On the ring finger of his left hand was found Taylor's favorite two-karat diamond. In the pocket of his vest was an expensive platinum case watch.

The fact that neither his cash nor his jewelry was disturbed indicated clearly that Taylor had not been murdered by a hold-up man.

But the open check book on the writing desk and the fountain pen nearby, caught the interest of the investigators.

PAINSTAKINGLY, Taylor, had set down on each check stub the amount of the check drawn and the balance remaining in the bank. These figures showed that the director, when he died, had less than \$6,000 in his account. A little black pass book, tucked away in the check folder, indicated Taylor had regularly deposited sums amounting into the thousands. The question naturally arose: what had Taylor done with his money?

A survey of cancelled checks yielded a puzzling clue. The checks for definite expenditures were small. But there were other checks for large amounts, made out to "cash." These were invariably indorsed by Taylor himself, but apparently were cashed by others, whose identity the police were unable to trace.

The police questioned Henry Peavy, the valet, who had discovered his master's body. From him they learned that Taylor, for some months past, had been living alone in his bachelor's suit. Peavy came in during the day to look after the director's extensive wardrobe and remained until evening to prepare dinner. But, after the dishes had been cleaned up, Peavy was in the habit of leaving for his home on the other side of the city.

On the night of February 1—the night his master was murdered—Peavy finished his chores in the kitchen about seven o'clock and left immediately.

"Was Mr. Taylor alone when you left the house?" Peavy was asked.

His answer to that question set off the first resounding bombshell in the murder investigation.

"When I left de house, Mr. Taylor was not alone," Peavy said, rolling his big white eyes. "He was sitting there on the davenport talking to Miss Mabel Normand!"

Newspaper reporters who were listening to the questioning of Peavy, knocked over antique furniture and sent costly Persian rugs skidding into the corners in their mad rush to flash this stunning piece of information to their papers.

Mabel Normand, the ravishing, dark-eyed beauty of the screen, whose winsome smile and flashing loveliness had made her the film sweetheart of millions—Mabel Normand was the last known person to have been with the slain William Desmond Taylor.

Miss Normand, summoned by the investigators, told a straightforward story, accounting for every minute of her time on the night before.

She had been shopping in the downtown district during the afternoon. About 6:30 p. m. she telephoned her home and was informed by her maid that Mr. Taylor had called to say that he had a new book for the star to read.

Anxious to get the book, Miss Normand made her chauffeur drive by Alvarado court. She arrived at Taylor's bungalow a few minutes after 7 o'clock, just as Peavy was leaving, discussed the book, a work of Freud, with Taylor for about 40 minutes, then departed, driving directly to her own home.

TAYLOR accompanied Miss Normand as far as the curb in front of Alvarado court, assisting her into her limousine. He spoke jestingly to Miss Normand's chauffeur, William Davis, then, at exactly

7:45 o'clock, as the actress was driven away, he turned and walked toward the open front door of his bachelor apartment.

Miss Normand and Chauffeur Davis said Taylor was in the best of spirits. He betrayed no sign of apprehension or worry over impending danger.

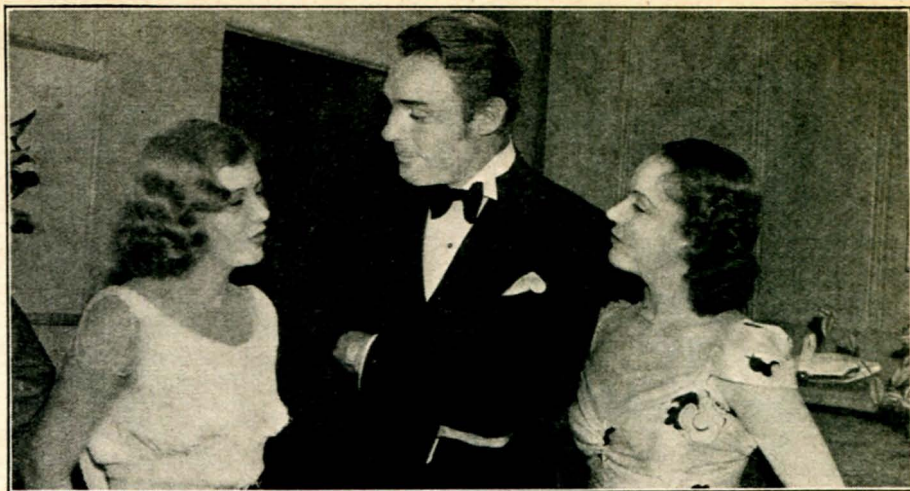
The next person questioned by police was Mrs. Douglas McLean. She came forth voluntarily.

"We were seated at the dinner table in our bungalow across the court from Mr. Taylor's place when Miss Normand left at 7:45 o'clock," Mrs. McLean said.

"Five minutes later, while my husband was upstairs getting a cribbage board, I heard what appeared to be a pistol shot. I went to the door and peered out. There was a man emerging from the front door of the Taylor home. He had his back to me, as if engaged in a final word of conversation with Mr. Taylor. He closed the door, finally, turned, gazed at me for a moment, then, without hurry or any trace of excitement, strode down the walk and disappeared between the house and the garage."

"There was nothing of a suspicious nature in his demeanor and I, hearing no further sound, concluded that the pistol shot was, in reality, the backfiring of an automobile."

Mrs. McLean's statement was of vast importance, for it set the exact moment of Taylor's death, and it established that the great motion picture director had been assassinated **LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES AFTER MISS NORMAND TOOK HER DEPARTURE.**



—Fawcett photo by Rhodes

Fay Wray and Randy Scott are a study in rapt attention as they listen in on a bit of Glenda Farrell's dialogue. She's known as a sparkling conversationalist

While the police were questioning Mrs. McLean, newspaper reporters, still licking their chops over the welcome injection of Miss Normand's name into the tragedy, were prowling about the death bungalow in search of further "sensations." They were soon rewarded for their effort.

"Let's go upstairs and see what we can see," said one of the news men, to his fellows.

THAT suggestion exploded the second bombshell in the Taylor case. It brought about revelations that few Hollywood people already knew—that Taylor, besides being a good director, was an ardent Romeo of many love affairs, that many a heart must have ached with his passing. And for awhile it made detectives wonder if perhaps one of these broken hearts might be hiding the guilt of cold blooded murder!



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Mrs. William L. Mellon, Jr.

says: "After Pond's Vanishing Cream, powder goes on evenly and stays looking fresh. I use it overnight, too, after cleansing."

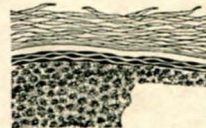
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Overnight—Apply Pond's Vanishing Cream after your nightly cleansing. Leave it on. As you sleep, your skin gets softer.



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Dead cells on the top of your skin are dried out by exposure, flake off. You can melt them smooth.

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In Taylor's bedroom there was uncovered a pair of riding boots. In the toe of one of these boots were stuffed a dozen fervent love letters, written in an easily deciphered code.

The coded love notes were the fervid outpourings of a young girl's heart to the man she quite apparently loved. They spoke of "being alone," of "a cozy warm fire and wind whistling through the trees," and of "sweet lips pressed to mine in a long, sweet kiss."

One of the letters, quite naked in its truth without the code being used, contained this line:

"I love you, I love you, I love you. God, I love you!"

But these revelations were not all. Hanging on a hook in the clothes closet of the director's bedroom was a dainty pink "nightie."

It bore three initials. In a drawer of the Taylor dressing table was a filmy lace handkerchief bearing the same three initials. Initials which detectives thought would identify the owner.

But this lead never helped in the actual solution of the murder.

Once having found this evidence, detectives were led on a long, involved trail of Taylor's many loves. They tried in vain to learn the identity of a "phantom sweetheart" who often slipped into his home at night.

They knew that not only this woman, but many others doubtlessly were suffering in shameful silence, suffering the loneliness of broken hearts, and the knowledge that they never again should see the man who had won their affections so completely.

For there no longer was any doubt that Taylor, despite his bachelor existence, had been a zealous Romeo. And besides these quiet, furtive affairs, these secret rendezvous, Taylor had the allegiance and admiration of countless women stars of Hollywood. Women who thought highly of him, who knew him as a faithful, idealistic sort of friend, who could quite understandingly be pardoned if they merely dreamt of him as a magnificent lover.

But this trail of love affairs was destined to end up only in a wilderness for



—Fawcett photo by Rhodes

Edward Arnold and wife are in a jubilant mood as they attend the party celebrating Adolph Zukor's Silver Jubilee at the Troc

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She lost 6 in. off waist, 4 in. off hips and 6 in. off bust. She lost avoidable reducible overweight and regularized elimination.

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the detectives who uncovered the first vital clues. At this point in the story it is proper to return to the scene downstairs, where other detectives were still at work studying the more obvious features of his existence.

WHEN the officers had concluded their interview with Mrs. McLean, they next focused their attention on Taylor's personal acquaintances.

On the polished mahogany top of the baby grand piano in the Taylor living room stood two large cabinet photographs. One was a likeness of the wistful Mabel Normand, already questioned. The other was a striking portrait of the blonde, blue-eyed Mary Miles Minter, who, at the age of 17, was rapidly scaling the heights of motion picture stardom.

Across the second photograph was inscribed: "For William Desmond Taylor, artist and gentleman. Mary Miles Minter."

Hastily the investigators sought out Miss Minter for interrogation. She readily admitted a warm friendship for the slain film director, but denied emphatically that she was either in love with Taylor or engaged to marry him.

On the contrary, Miss Minter asserted, the man whom she so highly respected and greatly admired had but recently informed her that he intended to marry Mabel Normand.

To Miss Minter's declarations Mabel Normand made formal reply: "There was no affair of the heart between me and Mr. Taylor. His feeling for me was

that of an older man for a girl who admired him and was not afraid to show her admiration."

Up to this point, although the disclosures of the murder investigation had supplied plenty of material for juicy newspaper headlines, there was little, save the testimony of Mrs. McLean that was of importance in tracing the actual killer. The next step in the probe went straight to the very vitals of the case.

In backtracking over Taylor's activities during the months immediately preceding his death, detectives brought to light a series of amazing incidents, all centering around one man.

That man was Edward F. Sands.

For many years Sands had been personal valet and constant attendant to William Desmond Taylor. He had been abruptly discharged in March, 1921, eleven months before Taylor's death.

Taylor had been abroad during January and February, 1921. While he was in Europe, the director's luxurious bungalow was ransacked by thieves. On his return to Los Angeles in early March, Taylor accused Sands of engineering the robbery, discharged his trusted valet and, after Sands had fled the city, swore to a complaint charging his erstwhile servant with burglary.

Taylor also charged Sands had forged his name to a number of checks amounting to thousands of dollars, during his absence. A warrant for Sands' arrest was issued, but it was eight months before anything further was heard of the former valet.

AT FIRST there appeared no connection between this theft and the earlier ransacking of the Taylor home, asserted by Sands.

But, shortly before Christmas, 1921, Taylor received through the mails an envelope containing a pawn ticket on a Fresno, Cal., secondhand shop. Inquiry revealed that part of the loot from the November robbery had been pawned at the Fresno establishment.

A second pawn ticket came to Taylor from Sacramento and with it a cryptic note which read:

"Merry Xmas. Alias Jimmy V."

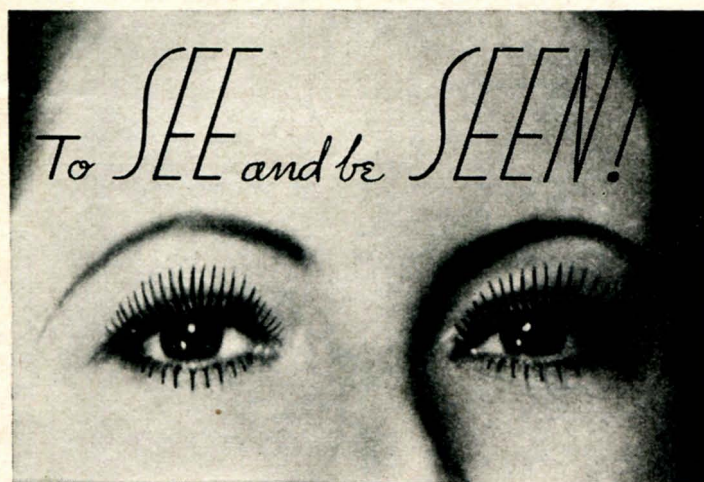
Indignant, Taylor declared that the handwriting in the note was that of his former valet. Again he called on police to apprehend Sands, and, in the presence of friends at a gay party in the famed Ambassador Hotel, the director less than a week before his murder, said:

"Sands has robbed me blind. If I ever lay my hands on him, I'll kill him."

Beautiful Claire Windsor, blonde film star, was one of those at the Ambassador party, who, after Taylor's death, declared she had heard the director voice this threat against Sands.

Close on the heels of Miss Windsor's testimony came the declaration of Mrs. Earl Tiffany, wife of Taylor's chauffeur, that she had actually seen Sands on Figueroa Street, in Los Angeles, on January 31, the day before the murder.

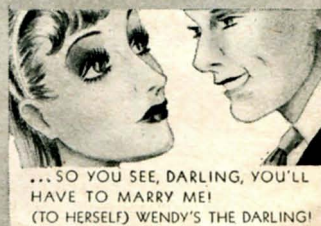
Bearing out Mrs. Tiffany's identification, another informant, one whose name the police never revealed, told officers, that he had talked with Sands less than



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MARY T. GOLDMAN
30-22 Goldman Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

Name.....
Street.....
City.....State.....
Color of your hair?.....

twenty-four hours before Taylor's death. "I came back to town to get that rat, Taylor," the anonymous informer declared Sands had said to him.

Nor was this by any means the sum total of evidence against Sands.

When a search of the premises surrounding Taylor's bungalow was made immediately after discovery of the body, the butts of half a dozen gold-tipped cigarettes of special foreign make were found, ground into the dirt behind a cypress tree near the front door.

It was behind this tree, police concluded, that the murderer had hidden while Taylor was at the curb saying good-night to Miss Normand. Nervous, the assassin had smoked fiercely while he waited.

Now, it was ascertained that these butts were part of a stock of costly hand-tailored cigarettes that had been stolen from the film director in the November burglary.

If Sands could definitely be shown to have committed this theft, it would tie him inexorably to the murder.

POLICE remembered Taylor's charge that the Christmas note from Sacramento was in Sands' handwriting. They could not find this note. So they went to Sacramento, and to Fresno as well, to check the signature of the man who had pawned the stolen Taylor valuables.

The expedition not only established the identity of William Desmond Taylor's killer beyond a question, it also shed definite light on the motive behind the killing—a motive of blackmail.

The handwriting on the ledger books of both pawn shops was declared by experts unquestionably to be that of Sands. But, the signature on those pawn ledgers was:

"William Cunningham Dean-Tanner."

For a while authorities were puzzled. Was there such a man as Dean-Tanner? Who was he?

The answer soon came—came from a woman in New York, who, in the late 90's had been a member of the original Florodora Sextette—Ethel May Harrison Dean-Tanner.

"William Cunningham Dean-Tanner was my husband," she said. "He was William Desmond Taylor, the motion picture director."

In 1908, after seven years of happy married life, Dean-Tanner had dropped completely from sight in New York, leaving his wife and little daughter, Ethel Daisy.

When he did not return, Mrs. Dean-Tanner divorced him. Then in 1914, William Desmond Taylor appeared on the scenes in Hollywood, first working as an actor, then becoming the great director.

Taylor had zealously guarded the secret of his identity. But Sands knew, for Sands had signed Taylor's true name on the pawn shop books.

When he was summarily discharged for his dishonesty, Sands, police know, sought vengeance against the man who had ignominiously dismissed him.

That vengeance, police believe, took the form of blackmail. Of this, every officer who ever worked on the Taylor case is convinced. And, when blackmail failed any longer to work—when Taylor apparently refused to "deal" further with his unfaithful former servant—murder was the answer. But police have never been able to find Sands and charge him with so serious a crime. He has remained forever a fugitive from justice.

Poor English!

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Who KILLED William Desmond Taylor?

BY CAPT. J. A. WINN

District Attorney's Investigator
Los Angeles County, Cal.

AS TOLD TO SELBY LANE

Front Page Detective
June 1937



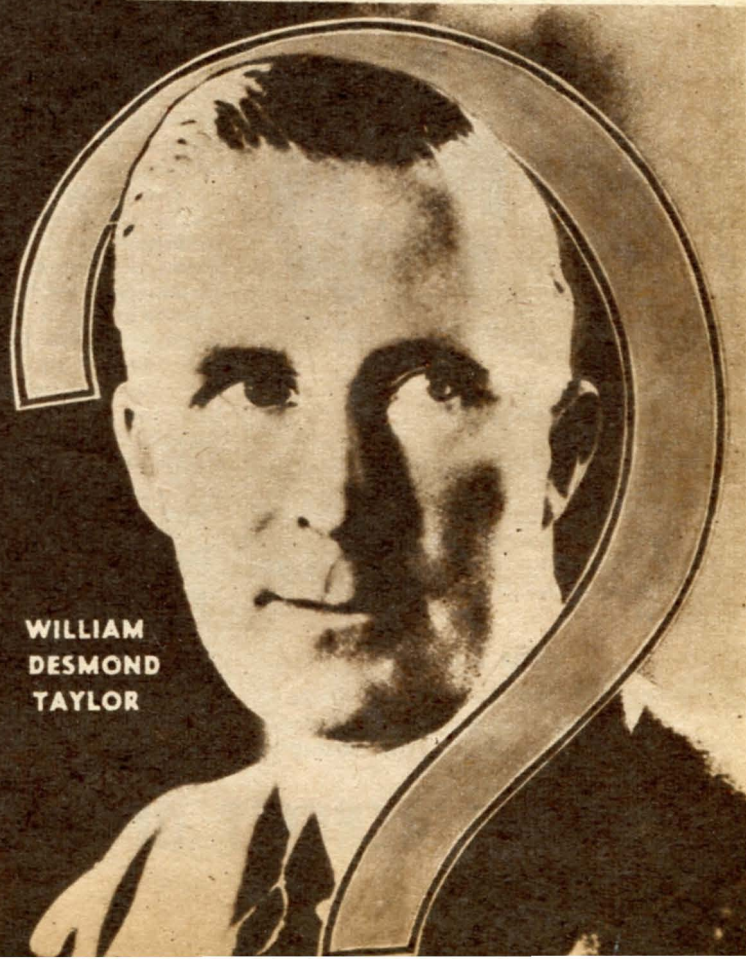
CASH REWARDS FOR YOUR THEORIES ON THIS CASE!

Center of many a romantic intrigue, famed as the director of numerous spectacles of the silent screen, William Desmond Taylor's sudden death is as befogged in mystery as was his adventurous life. Today, fifteen years after the killing shocked Hollywood, the case remains a fascinating study for the analyst of crime.

Many persons loved Taylor. Who hated him—hated him enough for murder? Why did he cloak his past in obscurity and live under an assumed name? What malignant undercurrent existed in his life that not even his best friends were aware of?

The missing servant, Edward Sands, has been pointed out as the most likely suspect in the slaying. Yet no strong motive has been found which would impel Sands to the deed, and there are many others who might conceivably have been connected with the case.

Can you solve the enigma? FRONT PAGE DETECTIVE offers prizes of fifteen dollars, ten dollars and five dollars each for readers' letters offering the most plausible explanation of the Taylor killing. No entries will be returned—address all communications to The Editor, 149 Madison Avenue, New York.



**WILLIAM
DESMOND
TAYLOR**

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, a blazing gun wrote upon the records of Los Angeles crime a question mark which stands there still, and gave to the Hollywood film colony a mystery which today is far from dead.

Who killed William Desmond Taylor? And why was this famous film director slain, amid circumstances so bizarre that even time has failed to unravel them?

We who toiled for years on an investigation of this sinister crime believe we can strike the question mark from the first query. It is now possible for us to name the man upon whom our suspicions fall as the murderer of the tall, handsome film personage.

But when we ask ourselves why the director was slain—the second question that has puzzled Hollywood since the morning of February 2, 1922—then the wall of mystery again blocks us as it has for so long.

For there was apparently no reason for anyone to seek Taylor's life. Genial, kind, successful, the director enjoyed universal esteem and respect. It is true that he had many affairs with women, but that in itself was not unusual in the booming post-war film capital, and rather more than many others did he live up to the rigorous code of a gentleman. No sordid triangles or hidden feuds were bared by the ruthless murder investigation—no hidden motives for seeking his death were discovered among the director's many acquaintances.

Yet one realm of possibility was opened up: Taylor's past history proved very hard to trace. True, all that was known of it seemed entirely honorable and quite in keeping with his later life, but long periods remained, and still remain, obscure.

What incident, if any, occurred in the adventurous youth of this amazing figure, that long afterwards was to mark him for death? If police could find one man now—the suspect we want—it is probable that this important question would be answered with no more delay.

We expect it to be answered eventually. For the Taylor case is still marked "open" in the Los Angeles police department files and strange tips and "clues" still appear

with surprising frequency, and we continue our probe.

Only a few months ago a war veteran came to the office of District Attorney Fitts with what he considered irrefutable proof that Taylor had not been killed at all! The body found in his apartment and recognized by scores of men and women, this man insisted, was really that of Taylor's brother—the director having staged his own "murder" in order to disappear from society forever.

The true solution of the crime, I believe, will correspond to no such fantastic theory. But I am sure that it will be amazingly sensational, for in life as in death, William Desmond Taylor was a figure of strange mystery despite his fame.

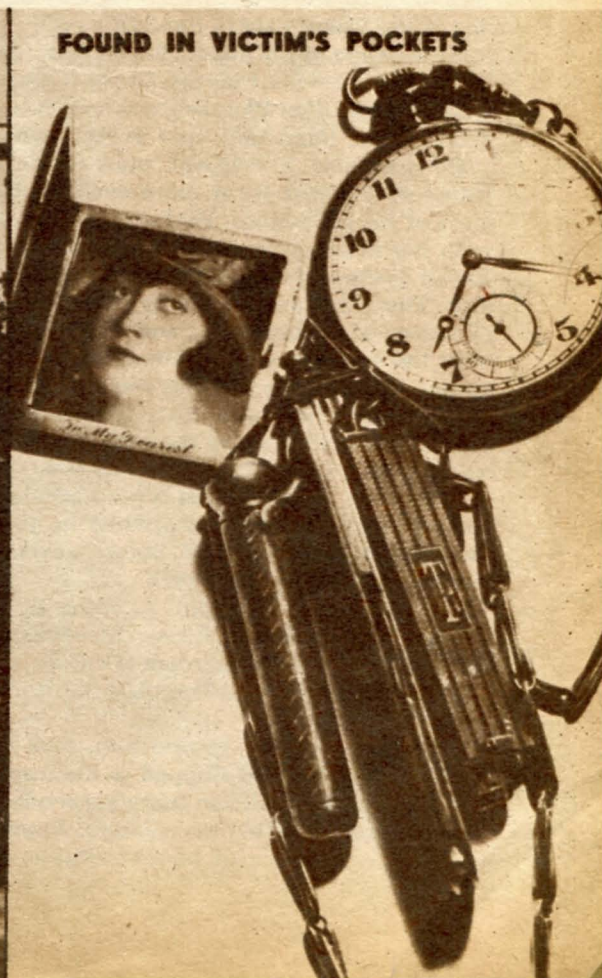
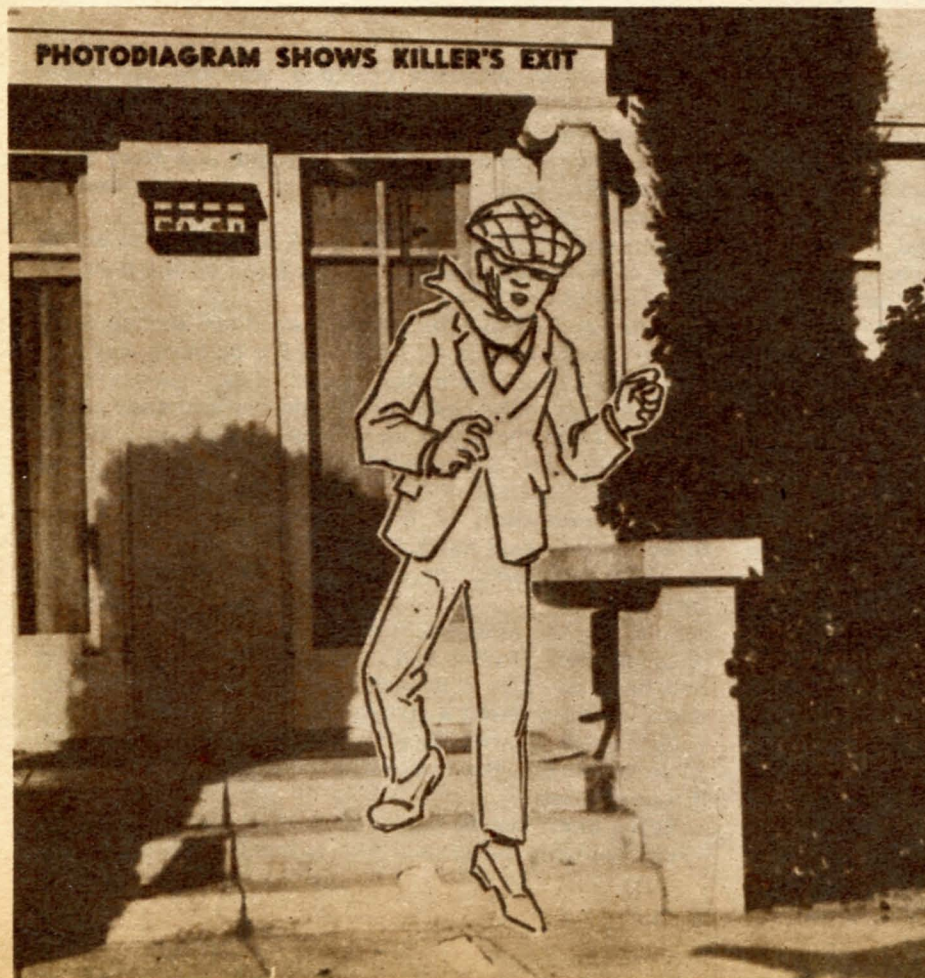
In fact, no one realized just how mysterious he was until that memorable February dawn when the residents of exclusive Alvarado Court, in Los Angeles, were awakened by terrified shouts for the police coming from Henry Peavey, who was Taylor's servant.

Alvarado Court is a U-shaped formation of expensive two-story houses, three on each side and two across the end, with a palm-studded courtyard in the middle.

Taylor lived alone in the last of the three houses on the north side of the court. Next door lived Edna Purviance, a film actress, and diagonally across the yard from Taylor's house resided Douglas MacLean, screen comedian, and his wife.

At the time of his death, Taylor's only servant was Peavey, an odd character who talked in elaborate phrases and did needlework in his leisure time. Every morning he came to the apartment at seven o'clock, worked all day, and returned to his own home at night.

Previously, Taylor had employed a man named Edward F. Sands, but they had quarreled in the previous March over the servant's alleged misuse of Taylor's funds, and Sands had disappeared from Los Angeles about ten months before the murder. Since then a constant search for him has been carried on, but he has not been found.



THESE SCREEN BEAUTIES FIGURED IN



MARY MILES MINTER—THEN

The blonde beauty was at the peak of her fame when the prominent director's death brought to light her passionate letters to him.



MABEL NORMAND

When it became known that she had left Taylor's home only a moment before he was slain, Miss Normand was questioned but could give no clue.

Taylor, in his little-known, adventurous career, had served with a Canadian regiment during the World War. Sands, too, was found to have been in the British army. Had he and Taylor met before? Did some other relationship exist between them than the obvious one of master and man? Many people thought so.

At the time of his death, Taylor was the leading director in the Famous Players-Lasky Company and president of the Motion Picture Directors' Association. He was definitely an important man in Hollywood.

He was also a brilliant man—widely read, widely traveled, and with a far more eventful background than most of his colleagues. Perhaps because of this, coupled with his impressive appearance and jovial personality, Taylor possessed a seemingly irresistible charm for women. Though nearing fifty, he commanded the affections of scores of lovely girls, and his apartment was filled with the photographs of feminine faces, many of them famous. Most of the pictures were autographed in warmly personal terms, and other intimate souvenirs of romantic trysts testified to the regard in which Taylor was held by his friends of the opposite sex.

This, then, was the man whose breakfast Henry Peavey was coming to prepare when he turned into Alvarado Court as usual, just before seven o'clock on the morning of February 2, 1922.

It was Peavey's custom to enter by the back door. As he approached the house, however, he saw a light shining from the living room window, so he went in at the front in order to extinguish the light on his way to the kitchen.

He closed the door behind him, took one step toward the light switch—and stopped in his tracks. The hand he raised to press the button hung suspended for a moment, then suddenly started to tremble. Peavey's face wrinkled into a grimace of uncontrollable repugnance and

horror as he muttered in a barely audible voice: "Merciful God!"

Rushing to the street, the manservant quickly awakened all the neighbors with his frantic outcries. Wringing his hands, he screamed over and over again, "Help, help! Mr. Taylor is dead!"

MEN AND WOMEN crowded into the apartment where the electric light was still burning, shedding its rays over the mulberry carpet, the grand piano on which stood pictures of Mabel Normand and Mary Miles Minter, the tapestry divan, and the mahogany desk in the center of the room.

Wan and pallid in the dawn, the light fell also on the body of William Desmond Taylor, lying on the floor beside the desk.

He lay on his back, legs outstretched and feet close together, arms straight by his sides. His clothing was neat and unwrinkled. There was no sign of disturbance in the room, except that a chair had toppled over and lay across Taylor's feet. There was no weapon in sight and, at first glance, no sign of a wound. The dead man's face was peaceful.

From somewhere in the crowd came a doctor, who lifted Taylor's cold hand, listened at his chest.

"Dead for hours," he said. "It looks like a heart attack."

And, for the moment, it did.

Lying there, Taylor had the appearance of a man who had been stricken with sudden illness and fallen backward, dying without a struggle.

Not until Charlie Eyton, Taylor's studio associate, came rushing to the house did those present know that it was murder.

Eyton knelt beside Taylor and lifted his dead friend's head. Suddenly he gasped and pointed at the mulberry

TAYLOR'S LIFE — AND DEATH



MISS MINTER—TODAY

Demanding that her name be cleared in the investigation, the former star is shown after she admitted that Taylor was her one "great love."



NEVA GERBER

Revealing that she had once been engaged to Taylor, but that the engagement had been broken, this screen actress said he was often despondent.

carpet—and at what stood hideously revealed when the body was moved.

A pool of blood lay under the body. The crimson stain was hardly distinguishable against the rich, wine-colored floor covering.

Taylor had been shot in the back with a well-placed bullet that must have killed him instantly!

Obviously, it was neither suicide nor accident. Men don't shoot themselves in the back, and there was no gun in the room. Equally clear was the fact that robbery had not been the slayer's motive, for the director wore an expensive diamond ring. His platinum-cased watch rested in his pocket. His wallet held seventy-eight dollars, and nothing had been touched in the apartment.

With the news of Taylor's strange death, his many friends clamored for the arrest of the killer, and the homicide squad swung into immediate action. Doctors declared the film director had been dead for about twelve hours, which placed the shooting at between seven and eight o'clock the preceding night.

Detectives first questioned other residents of the court, interviewing all neighbors for some clue. One after another they asserted that they had heard no unusual sounds during the time when the murder occurred and could offer no explanation for the shooting.

Yet even while the detectives were making their rounds of the Alvarado householders, a woman hurried to police headquarters with just the information we were looking for. She was Mrs. Douglas MacLean, wife of the comedian, who lived diagonally across the court. And today, fifteen years after the crime, her brief story remains almost the only definite, undisputed hint as to what actually happened.

Still shaken, Mrs. MacLean convinced us that she had seen the murderer in the act of escaping from the scene!

She said that on the evening of February 1, she had

been sitting alone at the dinner table shortly before eight o'clock. Her husband had left to get a cribbage board. In the few minutes that he was gone, she heard a sudden, sharp crack like a pistol explosion, coming from the direction of the other houses.

Startled but not alarmed, Mrs. MacLean rose and went to the window.

At first everything seemed as usual in the small formal courtyard. Then she saw standing at Taylor's front door a man whom she described as "very funny-looking." His back was to her, she said, as if he had just emerged from the door and then paused to speak to someone inside. As she watched, he turned about, closed the door briskly, walked with swift steps around into the passageway which leads from the house to the garages in the rear, and disappeared. That was the last she saw of him.

Immediately I seized upon Mrs. MacLean's unusual phrase, "a funny-looking person." Could she describe his appearance more closely?

She confessed that, having no suspicion that a murder had occurred, she had not noticed the man particularly. But he appeared to be short and stocky, she said, and he wore a turtle-neck sweater like a boxer. She remembered, too, that he wore a large plaid cap and had a muffler around his neck, all of which lent him the grotesque appearance which had inspired her phrase.

"I thought that he was just some minor actor who had been out on location," Mrs. MacLean explained. "That was how I interpreted the odd garments."

It seemed that the man she saw was grinning as if he had just heard a joke, though she could not see his face clearly because of the cap. At any rate, he behaved so casually that any suspicions she might have had were lulled. Carelessly, she dismissed the noise which had drawn her to the window, as the back-firing of a car. But the next morning, when the court was wakened by Pea-

FOR FIFTEEN YEARS HE HAS SOUGHT A PHANTOM KILLER



CAPTAIN WINN

assigned to cases requiring wide background and expert sleuthing ability.

Never losing his interest in the Taylor enigma, Captain Winn describes in this story—from personal experience—the maze of contradictory clues and puzzling complications that beset investigators.

A former soldier who served two years in the Philippines, Captain Jess A. Winn joined the Los Angeles police force in 1905 and rose steadily. A detective captain when the Taylor murder blazed across the crime firmament, he is now a member of the Los Angeles County district attorney's staff and is assigned to cases requiring wide background and expert sleuthing ability.

vey's cries, she realized that in all probability she had not only heard a murder shot, but seen the man who had fired it.

Another bit of correlative evidence came from Mrs. MacLean's maid. She said that when she was on the screen porch shortly after 7:30 on the fatal night, she heard a man's footsteps crunching the gravel in the alley next to the garages.

And that, presumably, was the slayer arriving.

If this was the case, we could definitely establish the time of the shooting at some time during the twenty-five minutes between 7:30 and 7:55 P. M.

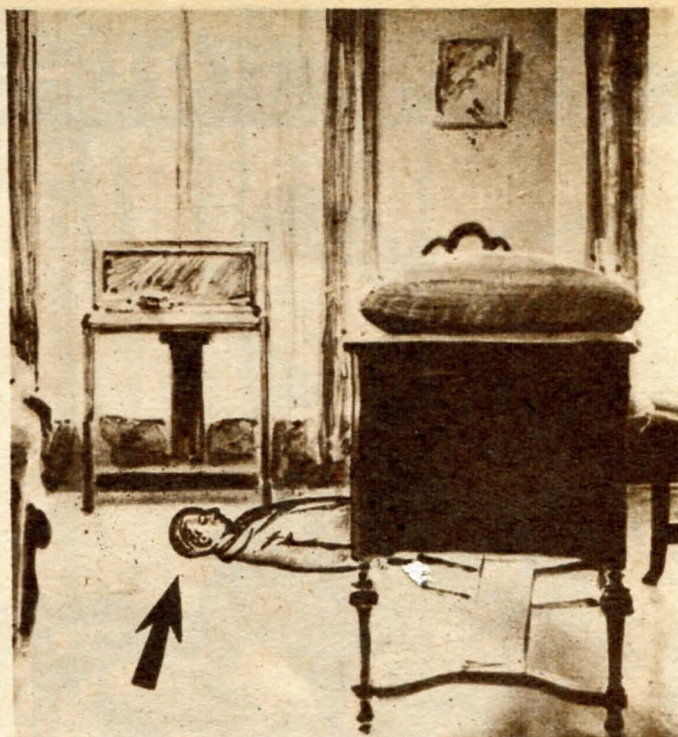
Now it became highly important to find the last person known to have seen Taylor alive. It took only a few inquiries to find who this person was. Like a thunderbolt came the news that William Desmond Taylor had received a visitor only a few minutes before the time of his death. And still greater was the sensation in Hollywood when it became known that this visitor was Mabel Normand!

A GLAMOROUS star then at the height of her career, Mabel Normand seemed fated by destiny to be in the neighborhood when something sensational occurred, whether she had any remote connection with it or not. For this reason some of her friends spoke of her laughingly as Hollywood's "unluckiest girl."

She and Taylor had been good friends for years, she told the police, but she denied that any romantic attachment existed between them. Strangely enough, an autographed photo of Miss Normand stood upon the piano in the director's apartment and had looked down upon his body all during the fatal night.

The actress had stopped off at his apartment to pick up two books which he had promised to loan her, she said. This was early in the evening of February 1. She had left him, apparently in excellent spirits, at 7:45 P. M., less than five minutes before Mrs. MacLean, in her apartment across the court, heard the shot fired by Taylor's murderer!

This exceedingly close time relationship indicated that in the few moments while Taylor stood at the curb by Miss Normand's car, saying goodbye, the murderer had



HOW BODY WAS FOUND

Photodigram shows the position of Taylor's body as discovered by Henry Peavey, a manservant, when he arrived on the morning of February 2.

crept into his apartment to await his return.

Shocked by the tragedy, the actress gave a detailed account of her activities that afternoon. She had gone downtown, she said, driven by her chauffeur, William Davis. After shopping at several stores, she had telephoned her home. The maid said that Taylor had called up to say that he had two books ready for her.

Miss Normand told her maid that she would stop at the director's apartment on her way home. It was then nearly seven o'clock.

As she walked toward her car after telephoning, the actress paused to buy a bag of peanuts from a vendor, and later, on the way to Alvarado Court she stopped to buy two magazines, but the trip did not take long.

Taylor greeted her at the door of his apartment and she solemnly pressed the bag of peanuts into his hand, both of them laughing at the gift. It was the last thing anyone gave Taylor, recipient of many presents from admiring women.

"Mix a couple of cocktails, Henry," he called to the servant as Mabel followed him to the desk at which he had been working. She told us that cancelled checks almost covered the desk.

"Look what that damned Sands did," she said Taylor remarked. "They are forgeries, half of them; and so good that I can't tell them apart."

Peavey brought the cocktails and for a few minutes the actress lingered to chat and drink. Then Taylor gave her the books she had come for and together they walked out toward her car. There they said goodbye and Miss Normand drove away, blowing kisses to Taylor while he stood on the sidewalk and waved until she was out of sight.

There could be little doubt that after this farewell, the director, on returning to his apartment, walked straight into an ambush of death.

Having established the time of the slaying almost to the exact minute, we thought that the killer's apprehension would come speedily. But instead of clearing up,



DROPPED FROM SIGHT

Above is the only known photograph of the vanished Edward Sands, Taylor's former valet, who was known to have quarreled with his master.



ROMANTIC FIGURE

Inscribed to Mary Miles Minter, this wartime picture of Taylor shows him as a British officer—only one of the many phases of his adventurous life.

the crime now plunged itself into deeper mystery—and in the foreground was another actress.

Mary Miles Minter, like Mabel Normand, was then a national darling of screen fans even though she was still very young. Yet it soon became apparent that she and the middle-aged film director were exceedingly good friends.

In Taylor's apartment were several photographs of Miss Minter, all bearing affectionate inscriptions. And there were letters—stacks of them. Some were written in a schoolgirl code, easily translated, and all were studded with crosses which, in every lover's language, stand for kisses. The letters were signed simply, "Mary."

"Dearest, I love you. I love you. I love you," one of them said in part, ending with a row of kisses across the page.

Another: "What shall I call you, wonderful man? I want to go away with you, up in the hills—anywhere, just so we can be alone.

"Wouldn't it be gorgeous to sit in a big comfy couch by a cozy warm fire, with the wind whistling outside, trying to harmonize with the faint strains of music coming from the victrola?

"I would sweep and dust (they make the sweetest dust caps, you know), and fix the table, and help you wash the dishes, and darn your socks.

"I'd go to my room and put on something soft and flowing. Then I would lie on the couch and wait for you. I might fall asleep, for a fire makes me drowsy. Then I would wake and find two strong arms around me and two dear lips pressed to mine in a long, sweet kiss."

Yes, it was very evident that blonde little Mary Miles Minter was deeply in love with the romantic-appearing Taylor. Very recently, she has confessed that Taylor was the "great love" of her life. But at the time of these disclosures the attendant publicity seriously menaced her career, as it did that of Mabel Normand, who also shared in the tremendous publicity given the case.

In examining Taylor's apartment we found several fine

silk handkerchiefs of which Miss Minter admitted ownership. And there was also discovered a pink silk nightgown.

This filmy garment became the center of a violent controversy which had repercussions as late as this year. It was reported that the gown bore the initials "M.M.M."

Mary Miles Minter was emphatic at the time in denying ownership of this night garment, and last February 2, on the fifteenth anniversary of the murder, she formally demanded that her name be cleared from the imputations of the old story. She even asserted that no nightgown had been found.

A check of the Taylor case evidence, still held by authorities, revealed no pink silk nightgown, with or without initials. But the records showed that one had been received and listed after the crime.

If so, where is it now? By what agency did it vanish?

WE HAD NOT GONE very far into the Taylor case when we found ourselves up against the problem of Edward Sands, the missing valet.

Several interesting things were learned about this shadowy personage. It came to light that while Taylor was abroad, about a year before his death, he had left his apartment in Sands' care. During his absence it was ransacked. Jewelry, clothing and other articles were taken. Even his automobile was stolen, to be recovered later in a battered condition.

When he returned and discovered his loss, Taylor charged Sands with burglary and added forgery to his accusations when he ascertained that his name had been fraudulently written on a number of checks which were cashed by Sands. Other blank checks which he had left for household expenses had been filled out for inordinately large amounts of money and cashed by the valet, he also complained.

After accusing the servant privately, Taylor swore out a warrant charging him with burglary and forgery. But before it could be served

(Continued on page 93)

WHO KILLED WILLIAM DESMOND TAYLOR?

(Continued from page 61)

Sands had vanished. Nor was this all.

Eight months later, only two months before he was killed, Taylor's apartment was again entered and robbed of a large amount of jewelry. Sands was suspected, but still he could not be found.

This raid had a strange sequel almost on the murder eve. For Taylor received a letter, mailed in Sacramento, which contained tickets from a Fresno pawnshop. Enclosed was a note which read:

"So sorry to inconvenience you, even temporarily. Observe the lesson of forced sale of assets. Merry Christmas and happy New Year."

This faintly ironical message was signed "Alias Jimmy V." which apparently was an oblique reference to the name of a recent popular film, "Alias Jimmy Valentine," in which Taylor had been interested.

The handwriting of this message closely resembled that of Sands.

In Fresno it was quickly ascertained that the gems in the pawnbroker's shop, represented by the tickets, formed part of the loot taken in the second burglary of Taylor's apartment.

But these were not the only surprises revealed by this singular incident. For the jewelry had been pawned by a man who signed the name: "William Deane-Tanner."

And that, we discovered to our infinite amazement, was the real name of William Desmond Taylor!

This development transcended, for the moment, even the search for Sands, and it brought us for the first time squarely up against the dark mystery of the great director's past. It explained why he had been unable to find a birth record for "William Desmond Taylor," why all we had been able to learn of him was that his father had been a major in the British Army and that he had been born in Ireland. Yet even with the dead man's real name in our possession there was little enough about his origins and earlier life that we were able to piece together after months of research.

Virtually all we ascertained were the following meager facts:

William Cunningham Deane-Tanner had been born in 1877 in Ireland. It had been intended that he should make the army his career but, unable to qualify because of faulty eyesight, he had studied to become an engineer.

As a boy of eighteen, he first became associated with the stage as secretary of the Charles Hawtreys Company. His father sternly disapproved such a connection, and sent the boy to America where he worked for a time on a Kansas ranch. But the stage still called him, and for a brief time he traveled with Fanny Davenport's company.

Then came the Klondike gold rush, and William Deane-Tanner joined it.

Thereafter, for the next few years, his life alternated between trips to Alaska and stage engagements in the United States and Hawaii.

We found several stories of his strange experiences and adventures in the Far North. It was reported that at one time Taylor was snowed in for eight months at a lonely mine; again, that he had once been attacked by an insane companion and had literally talked the maniac out of his desire to kill. He was said to have worked as an engineer, helping lay out the Grand Trunk Railroad terminal at Prince Rupert.

And we found indefinite suggestions that on at least one of these northern trips, William Deane-Tanner had been accompanied by his brother, Dennis Deane-Tanner. It was the first appearance of Dennis in the record of Taylor's career.

Finally William Deane-Tanner left Alaska for Hollywood and the new world of motion pictures, and somewhere along the road—probably about 1910—he became William Desmond Taylor.

Why? No one knows.

William Taylor's rise in motion pictures was phenomenal. In a very few years he had reached the top. And while the handsome director was scaling the heights, an obscure figure remained in the background, on a different social plane. This was Taylor's brother, Dennis Deane-Tanner, who

played occasional small roles in pictures but whose relationship remained unknown even to Taylor's friends.

Certainly, we believed, this brother would be able to throw needed light on the director's past.

But strangely enough Dennis Deane-Tanner could not be located! He had disappeared from Hollywood some years before the night of his brother's murder. Leaving his wife and two daughters to struggle along without him, he had vanished completely, and it was only because of the murder investigation that his unobtrusive existence was discovered in its true light.

Where was this man? He had disappeared long before the crime. And he has not been found since. Like Sands, he left no trace.

Immediately a weird rumor sprang up that Edward Sands was in reality Dennis Deane-Tanner who chose, for some strange reason, to act as valet to his own brother. There was a whispered tale, irrepressible among the movie people, that Sands had drawn up a queer contract by which he bound himself to be Taylor's "slave" for life, though, it was said, the director had only laughed and ignored the unusual document.

In addition to the fact that both Sands and Dennis were missing, the rumor that they were the same man gained credence from the note about the pawned jewelry, which had been mailed from Fresno. The writer of this note, who was undoubtedly Sands, had known Taylor's real name, for he had signed it at the pawnbroker's. Dennis would, of course, have been aware of his brother's secret. Therefore, reasoned the theorists, Sands and Dennis Deane-Tanner must be the same.

One tipster, writing from Denver, claimed to have positive knowledge that Sands was Dennis. He said he knew both the brothers and claimed that Dennis hated William because of a love affair in which William had been successful while Dennis failed.

Off and on for fifteen years this belief was credited by many persons until Mrs. Ada Deane-Tanner, the wife whom Dennis had deserted, managed to prove by photographs and handwriting specimens that the two men were not the same.

WE DID, HOWEVER, receive more and more information pointing to a sudden hard feeling that had marred the former friendliness of Taylor and Sands. There was, of course, that jeering letter after the second burglary—the barbed attack of dragging from Taylor's past the name that, for whatever reason, he had chosen to abandon. Claire Windsor, the film star, told us that only a few days before Taylor's death she heard him say, "If I ever lay hands on that fellow Sands, I'll kill him."

Winifred Kingston, also an actress,

Adventurer



Many were the tales told about Taylor's past life, and to this day sleuths do not know how many were true.

whose picture was on Taylor's desk, told us this story:

That Sands, during Taylor's absence, bought women's lingerie of expensive quality and charged the purchases to Taylor; that he had angered Taylor by presenting a bill for groceries to Edward Knoblock, a writer, who was staying in Taylor's home as a guest during his absence.

Miss Kingston, too, had heard the story that Sands had drawn up a contract binding himself as Taylor's life-long slave.

Neva Gerber, still another film actress—there were many of them in Taylor's life—told us that she and Taylor had once been engaged, but that the engagement had been broken by mutual consent. She said that Taylor often was despondent, complaining of illness and "bad news from home," though he would never explain this statement.

Strangest and most bizarre of all, perhaps, was the story told by H. M. Horkheimer, film producer, the first man to employ Taylor as a director.

"Taylor did not seek women—they sought him," he declared.

And he went on to reveal a melodramatic incident which, he said, Taylor had once confided to him. Taylor said, according to Horkheimer, that as a young man he had been engaged to a girl in England, and that his fiancée's sister, losing heavily at cards, crept down one night to rob her own husband's safe. Taylor, staying in the house, found her there before the open safe in the dead of night, according to the story, and while they confronted each other, she in her negligée, her husband burst into the room.

To save herself, the story went, the woman accused Taylor of robbing the safe, and he, rather than denounce the sister of his fiancée, accepted the blame and served three years in prison.

After his release, he came to the

United States and took the name of Taylor, but the jealous husband was still on his trail, and followed him across the sea.

Nothing appeared in the investigation to corroborate any detail of this spectacular narrative. Could Taylor simply have been trying out a potential movie scenario on his friend?

It was about this time that another mysterious development made it appear that the murder enigma might be solved at last. Thomas Lee Woolwine, then district attorney of Los Angeles County, received a letter presumably from the missing Sands. It read:

"I am hiding in Los Angeles. I did not kill Taylor, but I can tell who did. I am going to stay in hiding until I am assured that I will not be prosecuted on the charges against me."

Through the newspapers, Woolwine immediately gave that assurance. He would drop the burglary and forgery charges if Sands would come forward and tell what he knew about Taylor's murder. The papers spread the offer far and wide, but there was no response.

Had Sands really sent that message, and then changed his mind about it? Had he been murdered by those who feared his promised testimony—or was it just another fake? No one knows.

A short time later we discovered that Taylor had had a bank account in New York that had once totalled \$7,811, but at the time of his death was down to \$18. Yet we could find no record of any withdrawals, no cancelled checks. What did he do with this money, and why was its withdrawal unrecorded?

At this point, a man named Harry Fields, arrested in Detroit for forgery, claimed to know the inside story. Taylor had interfered with the operations of a dope ring, he said, and had severely beaten a peddler to whom an actress was paying \$2,000 a month for narcotic

drugs. Fields declared that the peddler, urged on by two women, had determined upon revenge, and that on the night of the murder, he, Fields, had driven the slayer to Taylor's home. The killer had slipped into the house while Taylor and Miss Normand were talking on the sidewalk. Fields said that he received \$1,000 for his part in the job.

This story looked interesting, but it collapsed neatly when we discovered that Fields had been arrested in Buffalo on February 2, which, in a day before transcontinental airplane service, would have made it impossible for him to be in Los Angeles on February 1.

NEXT, A SANTA ANA rancher reported hearing two men, whose dress included parts of Canadian army uniforms, say that "there is one Canadian captain in Los Angeles we are going to get—he got us sent up during the war."

I went to Mexicali myself on that tip—took the rancher with me and asked him to try to find the men. In one of the town's saloons, he pointed to a man and identified him as one of the pair.

It was a man whose possible connection with the Taylor case had already been reported from another source, but who had been thoroughly investigated and cleared.

A report came from London that shortly after the Armistice, Taylor, dining with a friend in a London hotel, indicated a man at another table and said:

"He's going to get me some time. I had him courtmartialed during the war."

A taxicab driver told a lurid tale of two mysterious men and two equally mysterious women whom he drove on a series of strange errands on the night of February 1—errands involving the transport of a bulging leather bag,

JERSEY'S RIDDLE OF THE SLAIN

Who killed Norman Redwood, leader of the "sandhogs"—men who construct tunnels beneath metropolitan streets and burrow gigantic traffic tubes under rivers? From left to right, the mystery is graphically portrayed in photographs. 1: Norman Redwood, union leader, is shown chatting with Samuel Rosoff (right), millionaire subway contractor who employed many members of Redwood's union. 2: The body of Redwood is shown as it was found slumped at the wheel of his car after an assassin had shot him as he drove up to his palatial Teaneck, N. J., home on the evening of February 19, 1937. 3: Mrs. Victoria Redwood (left), the widow, and Mrs. Mary G. Redwood, the slain man's mother, are shown as they rode in the funeral procession on February 23. 4: Above is the rebuilt .38 caliber pistol used by the murderer; below, a picture of a gun of the same model as it left the factory, with the three-inch barrel which the death-gun possessed before gangsters converted it into a more easily concealed weapon. 5: Samuel Rosoff (arrow) is shown after the shooting, as he stood among his workers on a subway job. Though he and Redwood had long been associates, Rosoff admitted that they had quarreled recently. Jersey authorities have been unable to pierce the mystery, and Redwood's killer is so far at large.



great excitement on the part of his passengers, and a remark by one of the men: "What a fool I was to have done what I did."

One witness insisted that while Miss Normand was in Taylor's apartment, he saw a man talking to Davis, her chauffeur, and Peavey, who had stopped by the car in his way from the house. Both Davis and Peavey emphatically denied this, but the witness was equally emphatic.

This was typical of the many contradictions that made the Taylor case a nightmare for the authorities.

And confessions—we got them by the dozen! Confession letters came from nearly every state in the union, from England, from Paris. Letter writers of all degrees of education vied for the distinction of being branded as Taylor's murderer—or else they wanted a free trip to California.

One of the letters read: "We South Americans know how to take care of our women. We see swift justice meted out to those who wrong them." Launching into unprintable vituperation, the writer went on, "And even this is a mild description of a man who, hiding behind a polished manner, won the regard of many women, only to cast them aside when he was tired of them, for a new plaything."

Some of the confession letter writers even tried to implicate other persons.

One letter, which declared: "He didn't treat my wife right, so we went to his home, and I killed him, and I'm not sorry," was signed with the name of a well-known Hollywood man who could not have had the remotest connection with the case.

The confession addicts had a field day with the Taylor murder. Needless to say, not one of these scores of letters contained a useful clue.

The only possibility sifted from this mass of "information" was that Taylor

may have incurred the enmity of a dope ring. On that score we had the statement of an assistant United States attorney that Taylor, two years before his death, had come to him to report the activities of a Hollywood drug peddler ring and had urged that the federal authorities do something about it.

CONTEST AWARDS

In FRONT PAGE DETECTIVE's first "letters-from-readers" contest, the following prizes have been awarded:

Neal Ely, Y.M.C.A., Tacoma, Wash., first prize, \$15.

Mrs. Marian Bidwell, J. C. Penney Store, Fifth and Washington Sts., Portland, Ore., second prize, \$10.

Consolation prizes of \$1 each were awarded to: E. Mason Roberts, St. Louis, Mo.; Leslie E. Merrill, Stockton Springs, Maine; Eric Cohn, Memphis, Tenn.; Charles A. McDonald, Southboro, Mass.; Waverly H. Smith, Little Rock, Ark.

Winners in the second contest will be announced next issue. See full contest announcement on page 130.

Due to lack of space, no letters could be printed this issue. Watch the August FRONT PAGE DETECTIVE for new letters department.—THE EDITOR.

The women in the case—the film actresses—gave the story the added color and romance and spectacular value that increased its sensationalism. But we could find no proof that any one of them had a part in Taylor's death.

Taylor murder "clues" are still appearing. Every now and then, some new rumor breaks. We are becoming used to them—to wild stories, frequently traced to ex-convicts, to a renewal of whispered charges involving this or that man or women, charges that invariably are without the supporting proof that is necessary.

AND SO THE William Desmond Taylor case today remains wreathed in an apparently impenetrable fog, even as the past life of the romantic film di-

rector himself. Hollywood's greatest mystery and one of the most puzzling crimes of our times is officially unsolved.

Yet—we believe we know who killed Taylor.

In lieu of evidence to the contrary, it is our opinion that Edward Sands sped the bullet that set the film colony in an uproar. Such a reckless act would seem to fit well with the character of the man who, we believe, brazenly pawned stolen gems using their owner's concealed name, and sent the ticket to him later.

But why—if Sands is indeed the guilty man—did he resort to murder?

That is the question we cannot answer. Was he motivated by revenge for the charges of theft and forgery placed against him? This hardly seems sufficient reason for homicide. Or was there, perhaps, a more sinister web in the background of their lives?

Blackmail, for instance. . . . It is entirely possible that the former manservant was acquainted with some dark chapter in his master's hidden career, and that this knowledge gave him courage for his acts of insolence. It is conceivable that he returned on the fatal night to extort more money and, meeting with refusal and perhaps threatened arrest, blasted the life from William Desmond Taylor.

Many an investigator would give his right arm to find Sands and question him, if he still lives. For even if our hypothesis is correct, we are still confronted with a baffling blank which no amount of investigation has yet filled.

What was the strange secret that seemed to haunt the famous director's private life? What, in short, was the motive behind his slaying? After fifteen years the case is still a huge question mark—but some unexpected clue may yet break down the barriers and astonish the world!

SANDHOG UNION LEADER





Locket with Mabel Normand's picture found on Taylor's bureau. Case brought out more facts to connect Taylor with Mabel Normand and make her principal in case.

Here is the most famous unsolved mystery of the century. Little known facts are now given.

THE average tourist arriving in Hollywood today is usually disappointed. He finds an amazing resemblance between the moving picture capital and his own home town. He discovers that the wild orgies conducted by the stars are largely figments of the imagination of magazine writers.

Today, Hollywood works hard, goes home for supper and retires early. Picture making is a tough, serious business. And in twenty years Hollywood has grown up. Now she is a sedate matron who has completely atoned for the sins of her wild youth.

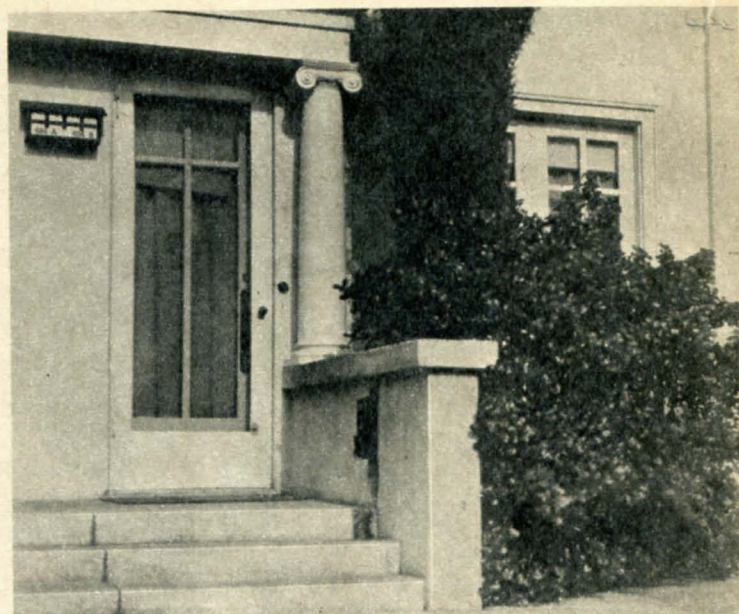
But in her day, back in the early Twenties, the movie colony was a fairly hectic place.

Perhaps, the most important single incident which highlighted and characterized the crimson events of Hollywood in those high, wide and handsome days, was the death of Desmond Taylor.

In 1922, the sudden demise of Hollywood's top director smashed into every paper in the country in 72-point headlines. The official investigation of the case brought into the limelight a dozen of the biggest names in Moviedom. It revealed the underworld machinations of the most powerful dope ring in the United States. It ruined a score of reputations, and saw an ex-governor of California shouting accusations which he was never able to prove.

But despite all this, the murderer of Desmond Taylor has never paid the penalty of his crime. He has never been identified. No one is certain whether the criminal was a man or a woman.

For twenty-two years, the Los Angeles Police Department along with every criminologist in the country has pondered the case of the slain director. Although, through the years, new clues and fresh leads have been uncovered, still no



This was the doorway where killer entered the Taylor house on the night of the murder. Even today this is perhaps the most famous doorway in Hollywood.

arrest has been made. Today there are some thus far unknown angles of the case to be considered. But, even when every return is in, it is highly doubtful that the killer who fired the shot that killed Desmond Taylor will ever mount the scaffold at San Quentin.

It was February 22, 1922. At 7 o'clock in the morning, Henry Peavy strolled through the bright California sunshine toward the residence of his employer. Peavy was Desmond Taylor's trusted valet.

At precisely eight minutes past seven, Peavy unlocked the back door and entered the Taylor home. He hung his hat up in the kitchen closet and walked through the luxuriously furnished hallway to the living room, preparatory to raising the Venetian blinds and opening the French windows.

Peavy stood motionless on the threshold of the room, staring in horror at his master. Taylor lay on his back in the center of the living room floor. He was fully clothed. His head was toward the east wall of the room, his legs outstretched with his feet near the door.

Henry Peavy knelt at his master's side. He felt Taylor's pulse and listened for a heartbeat. He neither heard nor felt any response. An instant later, he was on the telephone communicating with the Los Angeles Police Department.

The officer to receive the message was Lieutenant Tom Ziegler of the Central Detective Bureau. Ziegler, accompanied by Sergeant Robert Haley, drove at once to the Taylor house. The medical examiner arrived almost upon their heels.

The doctor knelt at the side of the corpse. Ziegler watched him anxiously. At this time Desmond Taylor was Hollywood's most famous director. Tom Ziegler knew quite well that if this death was other than natural the Los Angeles Police Department would be on the spot, the cynosure of every eye in the country.

WHO KILLED DESMOND



Taylor's wife and daughter (above) didn't figure in the mystery. They had lived apart from Taylor for some time and were not in Hollywood. Other women did figure in the case.

The doctor looked up and shrugged his shoulders.

"Looks like a heart attack to me, Tom. Of course, I can't be sure without looking him over. But that's my first guess."

Ziegler and the sergeant exchanged relieved glances. "Good," said the lieutenant. "Then I guess it's just a case for the undertaker." He glanced over at the anxious Peavy. "Any relatives you know of?"

"No, sir," said Peavy emphatically. "I never heard Mr. Taylor speak of any. He lived here alone."

Now, the medical examiner had moved the body slightly. As he did so he stared at the rich rug which Taylor's back had covered. There was a heavy blood stain on it.

Lieut. Ziegler saw it, too. "Great guns," he said, "do you think—?"

He never completed the question. The doctor had turned Taylor's body completely over. In the back, directly in line with the heart, was an unmistakable bullet hole.

"That tears it," said Haley. "We have a first class murder on our hands. There won't be a newspaper in the country that won't replate for this."

Ziegler sighed. "All right," he said, "let's get to work. Call the office. Get the photographers and fingerprint men out here."

Taylor (right) in one of his movie parts. As actor he wasn't great. As director he enjoyed more success.

Here is the famous love note in code. Decipher it and learn all about writing love notes in code.

Told Love in Cipher

[illegible]

Here Is the Code

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P
Q R S T U V W X Y Z

IN WILLIAM D. TAYLOR'S official two love letters, written in a school notebook, were found. One of them

TAYLOR

As Haley went to the telephone to obey the order, Ziegler questioned Peavy. The valet told a straightforward story.

He had left the house a little after 9 o'clock of the previous evening. Taylor had been alone then. Taylor was usually alone when Peavy was in the house.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Ziegler. "You mean he entertained after you'd left?"

"That's my opinion," said Peavy. "I never saw anyone here, but often I find women's cigarettes with lipstick stains on them."

Ziegler walked to the window and stared out toward the tudor house next door.

"Who lives there?" he asked.

"A Mrs. McLean," said Peavy. "She's in pictures, too."

"Well," said Ziegler, "the house is pretty close. Perhaps she heard something last night. I'll go over to see her. Haley, you hang on here until the rest of the boys arrive."

Lieutenant Ziegler left the house and a few moments later was talking to an attractive blond, Mrs. Douglas McLean, whose name at that time was well known to movie fans.

"I recall," she said, after she had recovered from the shock of the policeman's news, "that at a late hour last night, I was standing looking out my bedroom window. It must have been about two o'clock. Somehow I couldn't get to sleep. I saw someone come out of Mr. Taylor's house, running madly. He was wearing a heavy mackinaw coat."

"That sounds like the man we're looking for. Anything else?"

"Well," said Mrs. McLean hesitantly. "This is more or less my own impression but—"

"Go on."

"Well, I somehow believed that this man was really a woman."

"A woman? What made you think that? He was dressed as a man, wasn't he?"

"He or she was wearing trousers, if that's what you mean. But it was the way the person ran that made me believe it was a woman. There's quite a difference you know."

The dining room in the Taylor home. Body was found in the room next to this, sprawled out on the floor near an overturned chair.



This love letter (left) found among Taylor's possessions. Your guess is as good as anybody's who wrote it. As a love note it has long been called a masterpiece.

Taylor with Mary Miles Minter (below). Mary took a leading part in the famous murder mystery.



Ziegler nodded slowly. Then, failing to elicit any further important information from Mrs. McLean, he returned to the house where, by this time, the brains of the Los Angeles Police Department had gathered.

IN ADDITION to the routine work being done at the Taylor home, a nation-wide checkup on the past and antecedents of Desmond Taylor was immediately instituted, with amazing results.

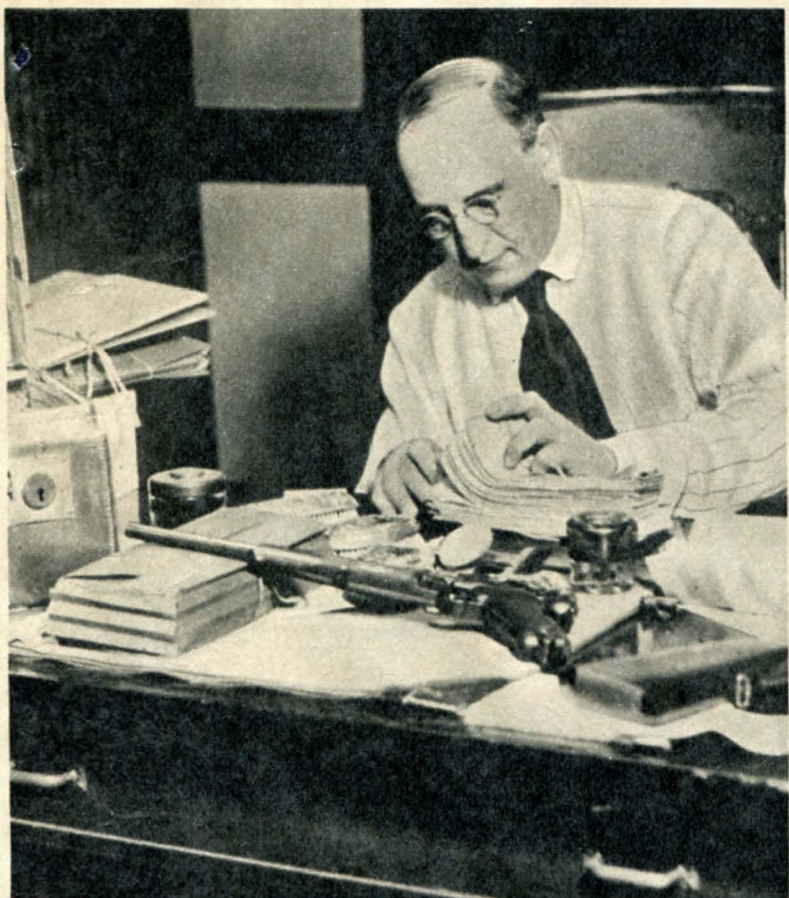
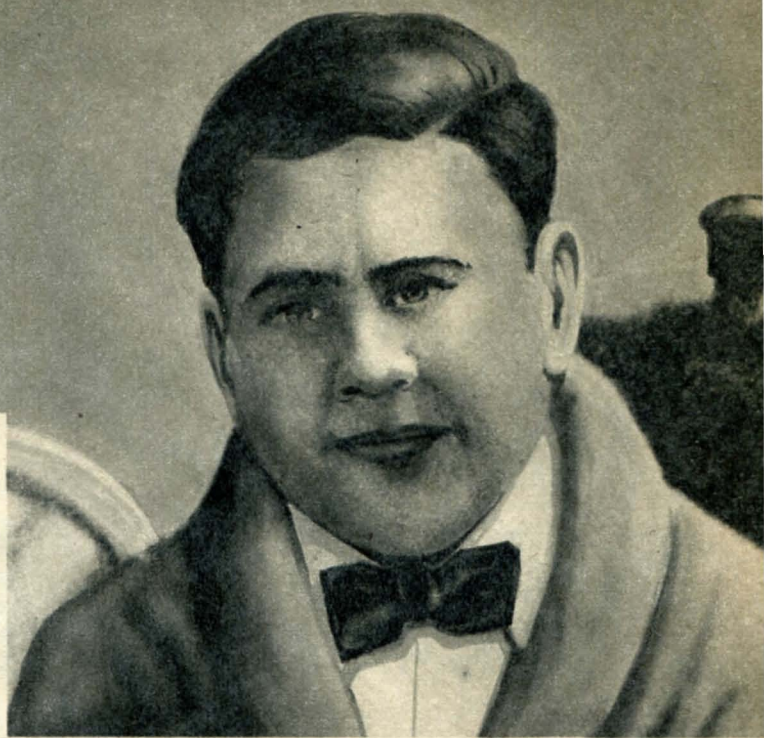
William Desmond Taylor appeared not to have any relatives. No one seemed to know a great deal about him. From what few facts could be gleaned, the officers learned that he had first appeared in this country at Runnymede, Kansas, apparently sent there from England as a remittance man because of his incorrigible conduct as a youth.

In 1906, he opened an interior decorating shop in New York. He married and had one child. The shop was a success and it seemed that Taylor was contentedly married.



There were many suspects and police searched for Edwin Sands (right), Taylor's chauffeur. When found Sands was unable to give any information.

When Taylor's possessions were examined in his home, many strange things were found. All did not concern women, who seemed to be greatly attracted to the director. There were rumors of dope, which were never fully proved.



Yet one day he disappeared completely, deserting his family and his business.

Yet he did not withdraw his money from the bank and his financial affairs were in perfect order. As a matter of fact, Taylor's wife, Ethel Mae Harrison and her daughter, Ethel Daisy, only learned that their father and husband was the famous William Desmond Taylor, when they were visited by the police who were checking. For in the old days Taylor had used the name: "William Cunningham Deane-Tanner."

He landed in Hollywood some time in 1920, where he obtained employment as an actor. And in two short years he had not only become a director, but a director to conjure with. He was one of the first men in the silent picture industry.

In the meantime, the Hollywood investigators had discovered that a number of Taylor's personal letters and documents were missing from his house. In addition, they found a number of canceled checks made out to cash for

\$2,500 each. This fact was rather surprising to the picture colony. They had believed Desmond Taylor led a frugal and secluded life.

It was no surprise at all to Henry Peavy, however. No matter what the others thought, Peavy knew that night after night his master indulged in expensive private parties. He knew from the empty champagne bottles he cleaned up each morning.

In a closet off the dining room, the detectives discovered a pair of woman's shoes and a silk handkerchief which obviously belonged to a girl. These facts, of course, bore out the valet's story.

Two days after the director's body had been discovered, District Attorney Thomas Lee Woolwine of Los Angeles County received an anonymous letter written in bold feminine handwriting.

It read:

Sir:

If you want to know who killed Desmond Taylor, send some men to Mabel Normand's apartment. There you will find a .38 caliber, pearl-handled revolver.

Now, in those days the name of Mabel Normand was a household word. Starting her career in the famous Mack Sennet comedies, she had worked her way up to a point seldom attained in the theatrical world.

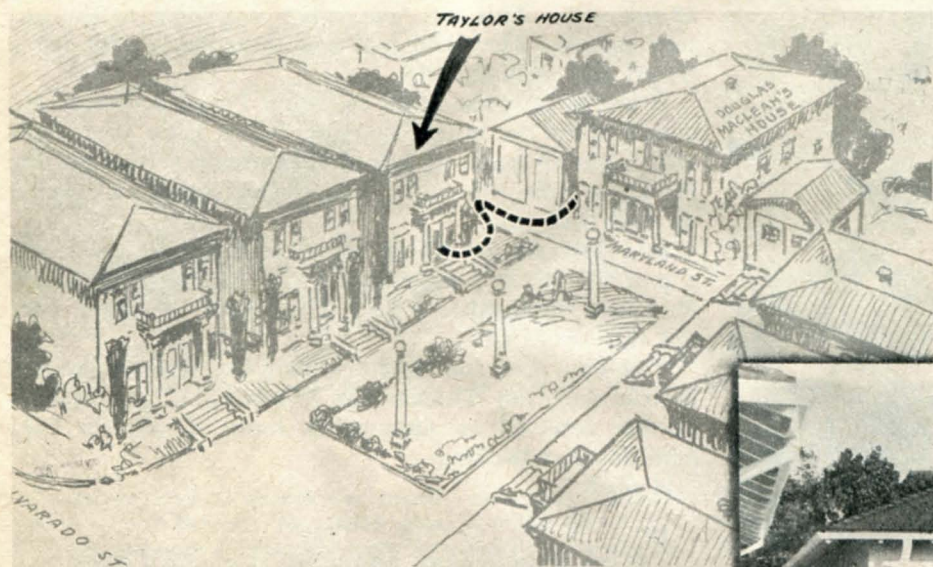
Less than an hour after the receipt of the letter, Lieutenant Tom Ziegler was on his way to the Normand mansion. He was courteously received . . . even after he announced he would have to search the house.

Working with Sergeant Haley, they went through the huge structure with a fine tooth comb. They found no .38 caliber gun. As a matter of fact, they found no weapon at all.

Returning to report the result of their fruitless labor to Woolwine, they were told by the District Attorney that another group of officers had discovered a pocket watch in the Taylor house, bearing an engraved legend showing it had been given the director by Miss Normand.



The case brought on to the scene the best detectives in California and country. They uncovered much scandal and announced daily that an arrest would be made in the case. No arrest was ever made and to this day the murder of Taylor is still a baffling mystery.



At this point, despite the failure to find the weapon in Miss Normand's house, the star was frankly under suspicion. Continuing the investigation, it was brought to life that Mabel Normand had visited the director on the night of the slaying. Apparently she had been the last person to ever see him alive—with the exception of the murderer.

Further combing of Taylor's house brought to light a love letter hidden in the toe of a riding boot. Moreover, the letter was written in code and bore no signature. This was given to the decoding experts and the search continued.

A second love letter was discovered. This one had been signed—and with a name well known to the world. The writer of this note was Mary Miles Minter. She was but eighteen years old, with long blond curls . . . the pin-up girl of the early Twenties.

She lived with her mother, a Mrs. Shelby, and despite her youth drew one of the largest salaries in Hollywood.

Questioned, Miss Minter admitted she loved Taylor, announced that they had intended to be married.

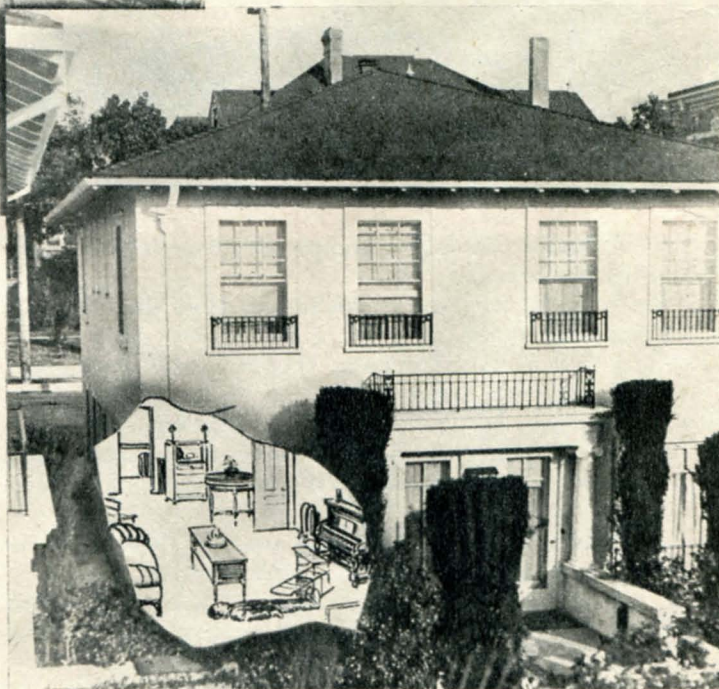
Mrs. Shelby was non-committal. It was the opinion of observers that, if she had known of this match, she disapproved. She refused to answer any questions put to her by the authorities. She announced emphatically that she knew nothing of the murder and was not pleased by her daughter's friendship with the slain man.

AT THE coroner's inquest, Mabel Normand, Mary Miles Minter with her mother, and a host of other current Hollywood celebrities took the stand to testify. But though a hundred whispered theories of the killing existed, there was nothing resembling a tight case against anyone.

The coroner's jury found that William Desmond Taylor had met his death at the hands of a party or parties unknown.

But that, of course, did not mean that the job of the Los Angeles Police Department was done. Their efforts were now intensified.

A few days after the inquest, Henry Peavy came forward with a new lead. He had remembered that Taylor's house had been robbed several times during the past year. The loss had invariably been trifling and the director had not bothered to inform the police.



Nobody knows how the murderer approached the Taylor home, but the artist's sketch above gives a good picture of the court where Taylor lived. Lower sketch shows position of the body when found.

Moreover, Peavy announced, Taylor had said he knew who it was perpetrating the thefts.

Morton Arleft had once been an employe of Taylor's. Discharged after an argument with his employer, Arleft, he said, had sworn revenge. Taylor had told Peavy that he was certain it was Arleft who was responsible.

Within two days the police had picked up Arleft who was working at a gasoline station near Laguna Beach. Any hope they had for solving the murder was quickly extinguished. Arleft had a cast iron alibi. During the murder night he had been at a party, and could summon at least a dozen alibi witnesses.

Two weeks after the killing, the newspapers of the country were still having a Roman holiday with the Taylor murder. And the Los Angeles Police Department had a throbbing headache.

Then came what appeared to be another break in the case. On Los Angeles' Main Street, the local Skid Road, a dope peddler named Joie Gerrone was picked up one night while practicing his profession. It was apparent, when he was brought into the precinct house, that he was under the influence of his own wares.

Far from denying the fact that he was a dope peddler, he boasted of it. Further, he boasted of his celebrated customers.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I'm no ordinary dope seller. I got the best customers in the country. Why, you remember that guy who was killed a couple of weeks ago? That director guy? Well, I used to sell junk to him."

The bored desk sergeant suddenly became alert.

"You mean Taylor?" he asked.

"Sure. William Desmond Taylor. A right guy. One of my best customers."

"Put him in a cell," said the sergeant, grimly. "When he's over the effects of whatever he's been taking we'll drag him over to the D. A.'s office."

The next morning, shaken and obviously afraid, Gerrone spoke to the District Attorney.

"Look," he said. "I don't know how true all this is. All I can tell you is the talk that's going around among the guys I know. They say that Taylor bought a lot of dope. That he gave it around to his friends. That he bought it from two gangs. One mob wanted to sell him exclusively because Taylor spent a lot of money. Taylor wouldn't agree to it, so they killed him."

Despite searching questioning, the authorities got nothing more than this from Gerrone. And this, at best was rumor with no substance behind it. Nevertheless, neither work nor expense was spared in order to find what glimmer of truth there may have been in Gerrone's story.

Investigating this dope story led the police along many strange trails. Prisoners serving time and known to have had strong connections with dope rings were sought out and questioned. The investigation led some of the detectives into old Mexico where several known dope organizations had their headquarters.

Yet, though the officers learned many things which would seem to corroborate the weird story told by Gerrone, they never assembled facts strong enough to warrant a Grand Jury Indictment.

Whispers and rumors came to their ears. Some sounded factual, others fabulous. But nothing resembled what a court of law calls evidence.

During this time the police were receiving over one hundred letters a day from all parts of the globe, in which the writers claimed to know who had killed Desmond Taylor. It was wearisome and arduous work investigating each letter. Yet somehow it was done, though it might as well not have been.

[Continued on page 91]

Desmond Taylor went to his grave with the strange secret of his death sealed forever. Every amateur sleuth in the country has tried to figure out a solution. Your guess is as good as any.



Desmond Taylor

[Continued from page 65]

About a month after the murder, a San Francisco pawn broker discovered he had lent money on some jewelry initialed W. D. T. He communicated at once with the police. The gems had been pawned under the name of William Deane-Tanner, the name which Taylor himself had used back in New York in 1906.

Tracking down this clue, the police came upon the trail of Edward Sands. It was proved easily that Sands had been the man who pawned the jewelry. A quick check on Sands revealed that he had, less than eight months ago, been the Taylor's chauffeur.

A dragnet was flung out in an effort to pick up Edward Sands in its meshes. But Edward Sands was not taken. As a matter of fact he has not been heard of to this day.

For eight long years, until 1930, the Los Angeles police worked doggedly on the case. By now the newspapers had taken up other scandals. The public was adoring an entirely new set of moving picture luminaries. Desmond Taylor was forgotten by everyone save the dogged detectives of Los Angeles who plugged away with elephantine memories.

Then one day in 1930 the name of Desmond Taylor and his moving picture associates were once again emblazoned on the front pages of the country.

AN EX-GOVERNOR of California, Friend W. Richardson, announced that he had positive information that Taylor had been murdered by a famous moving picture actress.

Richardson was rushed to the office of the District Attorney. Whatever disclosures he made were shrouded in secrecy. Neither the police nor the D. A.'s office gave anything to the press.

Richardson was taken before the Los Angeles County Grand Jury to testify. The press and the public waited avidly for news of an indictment.

There was none. Moreover, whatever Richardson told the jury was never announced. Richardson and the Desmond Taylor case went back into the files.

Thirteen years went by, twenty-one years since that California morning when the nation's top director was found dead in his own home. A new generation had sprung up.

Then, early in 1943, Federal agents arrested a man on a narcotics charge in Indiana. As they were taking him to arraignment, Herman Lyndon Gregory said,

"How about going easy on me, if I spill something. I can solve one of the biggest cases in the country."

The officers had heard this speech before. They didn't place much credence in it. But Gregory kept talking, insisting that he, and he alone, could clean up what was the biggest unsolved murder in the United States.

"All right," said one of the officers at last. "What case are you talking about?"

"Ever hear of a guy called Taylor? William Desmond Taylor?"

The officers exchanged glances. They had not only heard of Taylor but they knew that there had been stories of dope rings mixed up in the case. And the man they had in custody was a well known cocaine dealer.

"Sure, we've heard of Taylor," said one of the Federal men. "What do you know about it?"

"Everything," said Gregory blandly. "I know who killed him, why and how."

"Well," he was told, "if you tell what you know to the prosecutor maybe he will ask the court to take it into consideration when you're sentenced. Maybe they'll go a little easy on you."

Gregory laughed. "Look," he said. "For what I know—for the big names I'm going to mention, I want something better than that. I want a guarantee that I won't go to prison at all."

Naturally, Federal Courts don't make deals like that. However, Gregory underwent severe questioning while awaiting trial on the narcotics charge.

However, he flatly refused to talk unless he was guaranteed freedom. It was pointed out to him that the court would doubtless be inclined to leniency if he cleared up the Taylor case. But, because of his record, it was impossible that he be allowed to go scot-free.

Gregory stuck to his point. It was all or nothing, he insisted.

Later, he was sentenced to a ten-year term in the Federal Penitentiary. Even then Gregory kept his lips sealed. He was sent away to serve his term while the Los Angeles Police Department paced the floor and bit its collective nails wondering if Gregory had

been bluffing, or if he actually had the solution of the case which had baffled them for twenty-one long years.

Then about a year later, in March of 1944, Herman Gregory came down with influenza. He was sent to the prison hospital where, despite the efforts of the medicos he developed pneumonia. In early April he died.

And with him died, apparently, the final hope that the world would ever know who fired the shot that stilled the heart of the man—once Hollywood's top director.

And, was it a man or woman? Was it a spurned lady, or a thug in the pay of a dope ring? Was it a thieving employee, or merely some midnight marauder surprised at his work?

It seems as if no one will ever know the answer to this mystery; weird and bizarre as anything ever placed on celluloid in the moving picture capital of Hollywood.

IF YOU SUFFER FROM A STUBBORN SKIN DISEASE

you owe it to yourself to try
The New SULFA Formula

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Contains **SULFANILAMIDE**
and **SULFATHIAZOLE!**

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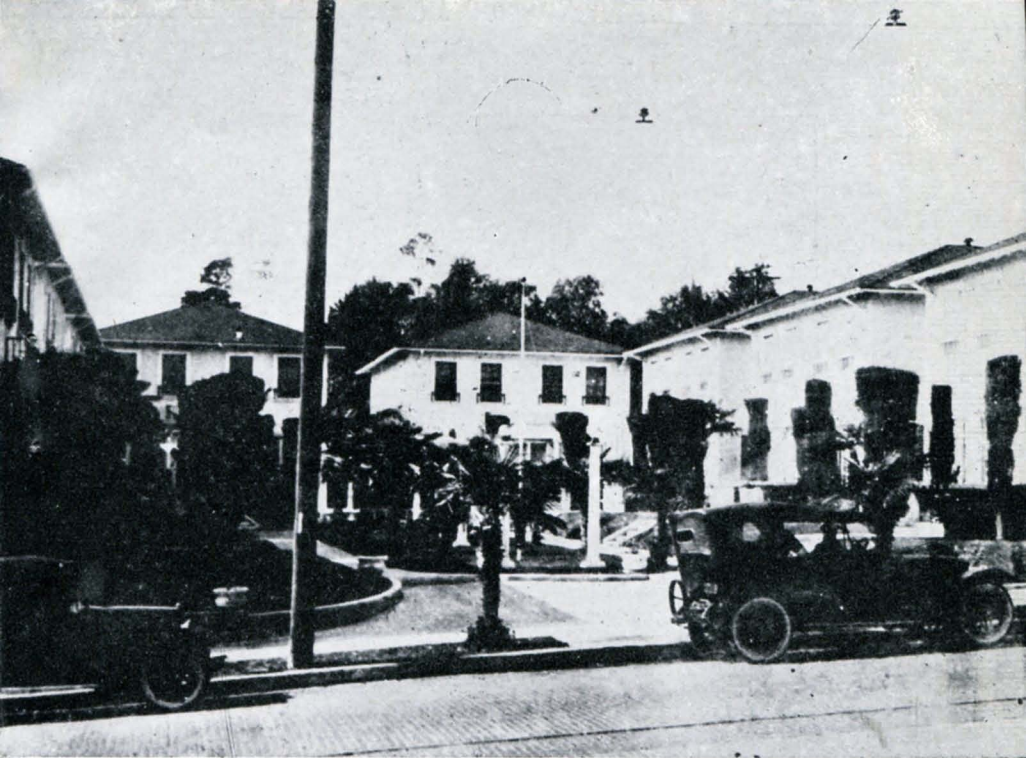
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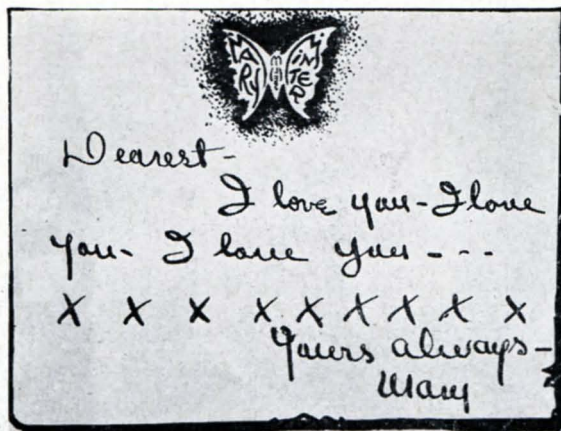
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Fatty Arbuckle's third trial was still in session when Hollywood was rocked once more — William Desmond Taylor (left), director for the Lasky Studios and president of the Screen Director's Association, was found dead in the living room of his two-story bungalow. Taylor had been shot in the back while seated over his writing desk. The gun had been discharged only three or four inches away from him, indicating that Taylor knew of his murderer's presence and was not expecting violence. Nothing was stolen and there were no signs of a struggle. The bullet was from a .32-caliber automatic, not the sort of weapon favored by professional assassins. Everything pointed to someone in Taylor's circle of acquaintances as the killer. Taylor's houseboy, who discovered the body, thoughtfully phoned the director's studio instead of the police. When detectives finally arrived at Taylor's home they found a corps of press agents ransacking the place, searching for certain letters. The police took over the hunt and found two sets: one from Mabel Normand and the other from another motion picture star, Mary Miles Minter.

Life and Death in Hollywood
1950



Taylor, who was in his late fifties, evidently had a weakness for young women in trouble. Mabel Normand became friendly with him after breaking with Mack Sennett. She had formed a strong interest in philosophy and literature, and Taylor, who was one of the few educated men in Hollywood, guided her reading. He attempted to direct her in personal matters as well. According to Mabel's letters she had been paying a narcotics ring \$2,000 a month for drugs and blackmail. Taylor had interfered and given one of their men a severe beating. Mary Miles Minter (right), who authored the other set of letters, was also under contract to the Lasky Studios. Mary, who later claimed to have been secretly engaged to Taylor, was troubled by a despotic mother. Her letters were gentle little love notes lavishly adorned with kiss-marks (above). The investigation was hampered by mysterious forces anxious to see it halted—key detectives failed to complete their assignments, pleading sickness. Taylor's studio hired William A. Pinkerton, the famous private detective, to look into the case and one newspaper wondered out loud whether Pinkerton was brought into the picture to aid or hinder the solution. The police were given an intriguing lead by Mrs. Douglas MacLean, wife of a motion-picture actor, who lived across the courtyard from Taylor. She had heard the shot and stepped out on her veranda. She said she saw a short, squat figure, apparently that of a man, heavily muffled and with a plaid cap pulled over its eyes, hurry out of Taylor's house. The figure, she added, was remarkable for its gait—it moved very much like a woman . . .





When Mary Miles Minter was five years old her fierce, domineering mother, Mrs. Charlotte Shelby, put her to work in a stock company. By the time Mary got to Hollywood she was a veteran of thirteen years in stock, all of it in wistful little-girl roles. Mary was a lushly-curved young woman by then but with the aid of short, loose frocks continued to play the child. The deception was performed to perfection off-screen as well as on. Reporters calling to interview "little Mary" found her cooing and simpering at her dolls, while her mother looked on. When Mary had "grown up"—she was thirty and passing successfully as eighteen—she fell in love with her director, William Desmond Taylor. Mary told Taylor her whole unhappy tale. Taylor was outraged to learn that Mrs. Shelby had kept for herself nearly every cent of the \$1,000,000 Mary had earned. Taylor became a caller at the Shelby home. Mrs. Shelby encouraged his visits at first, under the delusion that the aging Taylor was courting her. When she learned that Taylor was coming because of Mary she flew into a rage and warned Taylor to keep away from her daughter. Mary defied her mother, probably for the first time in her life. She insisted she would marry Taylor. Taylor's subsequent death removed that danger. But unrest continued in the Shelby home. At one time Mrs. Shelby had Mary committed to the psychopathic ward of the county hospital for a short period. Mrs. Shelby told the press that Mary had been drinking heavily. A few years later Mary broke away long enough to sue her mother for the return of her money; but the silver cord wasn't broken; it was merely stretched a bit. Mrs. Shelby tightened it again; she persuaded Mary to drop the suit and come and live with her once more. Mrs. Shelby's former maid testified that her mistress had owned a small pistol and practiced with it regularly in the cellar before Taylor was killed. Mrs. Shelby was asked to produce the pistol. "I haven't the faintest idea what became of it," was the easy reply. Triumphantly, she linked arms with Mary and posed for the photographers (below).



MURDER

A king in fabulous Hollywood. Women fought for his smiles; fans paid \$1 a piece for his used cigarettes; men were proud to call him Bill. Who killed him?

By William Monte Swann



■ An enterprising Hollywood urchin used to pick up cigaret butts discarded by William Desmond Taylor and sell them to movie-struck girls for souvenirs at a dollar apiece. The story gives an idea of the glamor surrounding the man. In 1922, the film capital was simply bewitched by him.

Forty-five years old, tall and handsome in a long-faced, distinguished way, Taylor had a worldly polish and a British accent that women found irresistible. After six years as a leading man he had become the top director for Famous Players-Lasky, the most eminent studio of the day. He directed such gilt-edged stars as Mary Pickford, Norma Talmadge and Mary Miles Minter, and quietly let them know he was running the show. He was president of the Motion Picture Directors' Association. At a time when you had either brains or charm to sell in Hollywood, he had a surplus of both. He drew \$42,000 a year, a fabulous salary in that tax-free era.

Taylor was the superman of the silent flickers. He collected Cezannes, drove a purple Duesenberg, and had his cigarettes specially blended of Turkish and Balkan tobaccos by a British maker. A lot of bigwig producers were proud to know him well enough to call him "Bill."

As it turned out, they didn't know him at all. They knew almost nothing of his past. They didn't even know his name. William Desmond Taylor had directed a number of thrilling mysteries in his day, but the most absorbing mystery

William Desmond Taylor's death was a mystery. And so was his life.

IN GLAMORVILLE

of all proved to be William Desmond Taylor himself.

Taylor had bachelor diggings at the fashionable Alvarado Apartments in Los Angeles' Westlake Park district. He had two servants, a houseman and a chauffeur, but being a man who liked a fair amount of privacy, they were with him only during the day or when he specially needed them.

At 6:45 on the evening of February 1, 1922, Taylor was just dispatching a mutton chop *a la Russe* when Mabel Normand arrived.

Miss Normand, whose comedy roles had already endeared her to millions, was a light-hearted woman in real life as well. She walked in and handed Taylor a small bag.

"A present for you," she said.

Taylor opened it and found that it contained peanuts. He went along with the gag. "Just what I was hoping for," he smiled. "I knew you wouldn't fail me, Mabel." He called his manservant, Henry Peavey. "Some Martinis, Peavey."

In his living room, Taylor had a Steinway grand piano. He was adept at picking out tunes by ear on it, but it was said that his real reason for having the instrument was his belief that there was nothing quite so beautiful as a lovely woman dressed in an evening gown and seated at a piano.

Some of Hollywood's most enchanting stars had sat there. Just as much as to have one's name in lights, it was a sign of topmost success for any woman to occupy the ebony bench, and rumor had it that many young starlets were taking piano lessons in the fond hope that some day they might be invited to Taylor's.

An 18-Karat Star

Being already an 18-karat star, Mabel Normand did not sit at the piano, though her photograph, affectionately inscribed to Taylor, was on it. She sipped her cocktail while Taylor showed her a batch of cancelled checks.

"Remember that fellow Sands, who used to be my butler?" he asked her. "Well, he's a crook—forged all these checks in my name."

Miss Normand's famous eyes popped wide. "You should see the police," she said.

"I already have," Taylor replied. "They can't find the man. He has, as we say in the Westerns, vamoosed."

The talk veered to literature, about which Miss Normand knew little and Taylor knew a lot. He had volunteered to (Continued on page 47)



Actress Mary Miles Minter: Her letters were more than warm.



Taylor told friends that he was in love with film star Mabel Normand.

Murder in Glamorville

Continued from page 31

advise her on a course of reading, and he gave her a couple of philosophical works from his own well-stocked library. Miss Normand left shortly after 7:30, Taylor walking out to her car with her and chatting a bit before saying goodnight.

"Call me later and tell me how you like those books," he said.

Henry Peavey had meanwhile done up the dinner dishes and gone. Some 12 hours elapsed while dark designs were consummated and Peavey enjoyed the quiet of his own fireside. He returned at 7 the next morning, ready to prepare the kippers which Taylor, always the Briton, had ordered for breakfast. Ordinarily Peavey entered the back door, but on this morning he saw a light unaccountably burning in the living room, so he walked in the front.

William Desmond Taylor lay flat on his back on the living room floor. A small Louis Quinze chair lay across his legs, but aside from that the room was in order. Gazing for a moment at his master's open, unblinking eyes, Peavey realized that he must be dead. The servant ran out into the courtyard and shouted for help.

The Taylor living room for the next half-hour was a scene of utter confusion. Neighbors, passersby and just plain buttinskis wandered in to look at the corpse. Among the callers was an unidentified doctor who took a quick look at Taylor and said, "A heart attack, apparently." Charles Eyton, a studio official and a friend of Taylor's, finally arrived and angrily chased out the morbid onlookers.

Taylor was believed to have died a natural death until Eyton lifted the body and saw blood on the rug—a rug of mulberry hue which concealed the stain except under close scrutiny.

"There's a bullet hole in his back," Eyton breathed. "Bill's been murdered!"

Telephones buzzed, and within five minutes everybody who was anybody in Hollywood knew that William Desmond Taylor had been shot dead. A well-known actress rushed into the Taylor place, strode past the body, and searched frantically in the study until she found a packet of letters. She put them in her purse and hurried away.

A studio executive spent a few minutes going over Taylor's remaining correspondence and left on the double with a bundle of papers.

There was a reason for this pussyfooting. At the time, many church and civic leaders regarded Hollywood as a sink-hole of sin, and this righteous attitude was raising Ned where it hurt most—at the box office. Film magnates were still having nightmares about the hotel death of Actress Virginia Rappe—a tragedy that cut short the career of Fatty Arbuckle—and other rip-snorting scandals. They were paying publicity men big money to portray film people as solid citizens who worked hard, went to church, drank only water, and avoided night life and sin like the plague.

A bullet in the back of William Desmond Taylor, known to be admired and visited by many famous film women, might have grievous consequences in addition to the sudden ending of Taylor's life. It might blow the lid off

Hollywood and cause an indignant public to shun movie houses and turn to books or bridge for relaxation. It might wreck the careers of stars involved, and therefore endanger studios that had huge investments in these stars.

By the time detectives arrived, the Taylor apartment had been invaded, stomped and pawed over, and a lot of possibly interesting evidence had gone down the drain. If ever investigators began a case with two strikes against them, it was here at Alvarado Court.

Taylor was fully clothed in flannel trousers, suede shoes and a velvet jacket. On his person detectives found, among other things, \$78, a one-carat diamond ring, a platinum watch and platinum penknife. It was a cinch from the start that something other than robbery motivated the killing.

On the sofa was a bag of peanuts that drew considerable attention. Taylor, a *pate de foie gras* man, would hardly go for unshucked peanuts and it was theorized that the killer had brought them.

On the ground outside the back door lay seven cigaret butts, quickly identified as Taylor's special brand. Detectives began to eye with interest the portraits of Mabel Normand, Mary Miles Minter and others that decorated the piano and mantel.

Douglas MacLean, the comedian, lived diagonally across the court, and his wife had noticed a few details. She said that Mabel Normand had visited the director early in the evening. Shortly after she left—close to 8 o'clock—Mrs. MacLean had heard a sharp report. She looked out her window and saw a "queer-looking person" emerge from Taylor's front door.

Shaped Like a Woman

This person wore a turtle-neck sweater, heavy muffler and loud plaid cap—such an extraordinary getup that Mrs. MacLean concluded he must be an actor just off location. The person sauntered off casually, and Mrs. MacLean decided the loud noise must have been a backfire. She thought no more of it until she learned of the murder, when her thinking processes went into high gear.

"The more I think of it," she said, "the more I'm sure that person was a woman dressed as a man. It walked like a woman and was *shaped* like a woman." Without saying it in so many words, Mrs. MacLean suggested that the sweater was not as flat in front as a man's should be.

Another neighbor said that at about 5 P.M. a "gorgeous blonde" had called on Taylor and stayed only half-an-hour.

Detectives speedily interviewed Mabel Normand. Apparently grief-stricken, the round-eyed comedienne told of her brief visit the evening before, and explained the bag of peanuts satisfactorily. She admitted that she had been very fond of the director, though Taylor had intimated to friends that he was deeply in love with her. She proved that she had arrived home and was preparing for bed to read philosophy at the time the fatal bullet was fired. She had telephoned Taylor at 9:30 to tell him that philosophy didn't make sense to her and maybe she had better start out on something lighter, and was surprised when there was no answer.

Henry Peavey was quickly cleared. The "gorgeous blonde" was never identified. But soon certain probabilities became evident.

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The pile of cigaret butts at the back door indicated that the slayer had lurked there for some time—doubtless while Miss Normand was sipping her Martini—awaiting his or her opportunity. When Taylor left the house to accompany Miss Normand to her car, the plotter must have seized the opportunity to enter the place. When Taylor returned to the apartment a few minutes later, he walked into a well-planned ambush.

The fact that the cigaret butts were Taylor's own brand meant only that the killer was a former friend, for the director had been lavish in handing them out to intimates.

The investigators did not have to be dirty-minded to suspect that the crime was committed by a jealous woman, or by a woman's jealous husband or lover, since it was known that many women were simply wild about the director. The strange fact was that Taylor, though he certainly had a vigorous appreciation for the opposite sex, was no woman-chaser.

On the contrary, women pursued him. They sought him out with such avidity that he had to take protective measures. On at least one occasion, a woman had sneaked into his house in the dead of night via an open casement window. On another, he had climbed into his car one morning to find a fetching screen damsel sound asleep in the front seat. Taylor was in the unusual position of having to lock up securely of nights to keep the women out.

Scuttlebutt had it that of all the pursuers, Mary Miles Minter—you'll remember her if you're over 40—was the most persistent and dedicated. Miss Minter, the blonde-tressed idol of millions of sheep-eyed high school boys, had decorated dozens of movies, invariably appearing as a shy and virginal maiden who had never so much as been kissed.

Questioned, Miss Minter proved that she was not the "gorgeous blonde" who called in the afternoon. She admitted that Taylor had been a "very dear friend" and was like a father to her. In Taylor's desk, however, investigators found dozens of letters she had written the director, some in easily decipherable schoolgirl code, others in plain, warm English.

"What shall I call you, wonderful man?" one of them read. "I want to go away with you, up in the hills—anywhere, just so we can be alone . . . Wouldn't it be lovely to sit in a big comfy couch by a cozy fire, with the wind whistling outside? . . . I would sweep and dust (they make the sweetest dust caps, you know) and help you wash the dishes and darn your socks.

"I'd go to my room and put on something soft and flowing. Then I would lie on the couch and wait for you. I might fall asleep, for a fire makes me drowsy. Then I would wake and find two strong arms around me and two dear lips pressed to mine in a long sweet kiss."

Clearly, the real-life Miss Minter departed somewhat from the movie script. The letters—many of which were studded with X-marks and "I love you's"—indicated that she regarded Taylor as something more than a fatherly adviser. The investigators found several fine silk handkerchiefs in the director's apartment, and also something soft and flowing—a pink silk nightgown bearing the initial "M."

While Miss Minter admitted ownership of the handkerchiefs, she took an entirely different attitude toward the nightgown. She denied angrily that it was hers, and it had to be ad-

mitted that Taylor might have known other women whose names began with "M." Bear this nightgown in mind, for it had a curious history of its own. Regardless of its ownership, its discovery was faithfully reported in the newspapers, as were some of Miss Minter's letters, and the blonde beauty's cinema popularity waned thereafter.

The studio executive was truthful when police questioned him about removing certain letters from the murder apartment.

"They were letters from married women, and I destroyed them," he said. "I wanted to avoid unnecessary scandal. I certainly didn't intend to hinder the investigation."

Nevertheless, he may have done exactly that. It is conceivable that had detectives been able to read those letters, they might have put their finger on the killer.

One of the most baffling enigmas of the case was Edward Sands, Taylor's missing ex-butler. While Taylor was in Europe a few months earlier, Sands had forged checks in his master's name and was also suspected of looting the apartment of valuable jewelry. The stolen gems later turned up in a Fresno pawnshop, where they had been pawned by a man who signed his name as "William Deane-Tanner."

And that, the investigators learned, was William Desmond Taylor's real name!

A probe into the director's past found plenty of gaps, but also enough honest-to-goodness mystery and adventure to fill several dime novels.

The well-educated son of a British Army officer, Taylor played juvenile stage roles as a boy, ran away from home and came to America at 20. He worked for a time on a Kansas ranch, became a civil engineer in Canada, and went to Alaska at least twice in search of gold. In 1901 he returned to New York and married Ethel May Harris, one of the original Florodora girls. They had one daughter, and Taylor for seven years made a handsome living as an art and antique dealer. His younger brother, Dennis Deane-Tanner, also came to New York and married, but was unsuccessful in several business ventures.

That's Your Father

In 1908, Taylor abandoned his wife and daughter without a word of warning and vanished for six years. No amount of probing could trace his activities until 1914, when he turned up in Hollywood under his new name of William Desmond Taylor. In 1915, his wife took their daughter to a movie in New York and started when she saw the handsome leading man.

"That's your father," she told the girl.

Strangely, brother Dennis abandoned his family in 1911 and dropped into a void until 1915, when he appeared in Hollywood and found work as a movie extra. Dennis, who retained his real name of Deane-Tanner, remained a 'lowly extra, while Taylor's success was sensational.

Though the brothers both worked in the films, sometimes on the same lot, not a soul in Hollywood was aware that Dennis Deane-Tanner and William Desmond Taylor were related. Dennis himself carried on the family tradition by disappearing once more in 1919. He could not be found for questioning.

Detective Edward C. King, an investigator for District Attorney Thomas Lee Woolwine, tried to make some sense out of this tangled skein of secrecy and vanishments. There was

a vague rumor that Edward Sands, Taylor's ex-butler, had solemnly agreed to become Taylor's "lifelong slave." It was apparent that Sands, who must have pawned the stolen gems in Fresno under the name of William Deane-Tanner, knew something of Taylor's past life.

More than that, the description of Sands and Dennis Deane-Tanner tallied closely. Both were missing.

Captain J. A. Winn, another investigator on the case, was convinced that they were, but Sands (or Deane-Tanner) remained un-found. California even then had a heavy percentage of crackpots, and the D. A.'s office was flooded with cockeyed tips, clues, leads and confessions. Twenty-seven letters were received from different persons claiming to be Sands, one of them posted in Germany, undoubtedly by a person who wanted free passage to America.

Fact And Fiction

At least two budding actresses "confessed" killing Taylor, knowing they would be cleared but hoping the publicity might do them some good. Scores of persons who hated someone and wanted to do them dirt, sent in anonymous poison-pen accusations that had to be checked. Dozens of detectives spent their time following screwball leads that got them nowhere, and it became very hard to separate fiction from fact.

Actress Claire Windsor, another friend of Taylor's, gave evidence that seemed to strengthen the Sands angle. She said she had heard the director say, only a few days before he was murdered, "If I ever lay hands on that Sands fellow, I'll kill him."

It was discovered that Taylor, who made money by the potful, had only \$18 left in his bank account, making it appear possible that someone—perhaps Sands—had been blackmailing him. Shortly before his death, Taylor had gone to Federal authorities to complain about a drug ring operating in Hollywood, saying he did so because of a young actress friend who was addicted. This made some of the detectives suspect that Taylor might have been in the toils of a drug combine himself, but they got nowhere with this inquiry.

The officials were now grappling with a mystery that might involve women, an angry husband, dope, blackmail or robbery, or a combination of these factors. Dozens of glamorous screen women who had entered Taylor's apartment either by the door or some more difficult way, were questioned, as were their husbands or fiancées. A new angle popped up in connection with Mrs. Charlotte Shelby, Mary Miles Minter's mother, who had devoted herself single-mindedly to furthering her lovely daughter's career.

A maid in the Shelby-Minter home told police that Mrs. Shelby was appalled at Miss Minter's infatuation for Taylor, fearing that the actress might become enmeshed in scandal and thus ruin an asset worth millions—her idealized picture in the hearts of American youth as the acme of sweet innocence. The maid further said that Mrs. Shelby, a sports-woman who liked to practice target shooting, had angrily warned Taylor that he must put a stop to Mary's visits at his apartment.

Miss Minter added fuel to the fires when she sued her mother for a million dollars, claiming that "I was constantly repressed by my mother, my life was dominated by her, and this was caused in part by the fact that my

mother was herself in love with William Desmond Taylor."

By this time the authorities might have been pardoned for becoming slightly dizzy. Some theorized that this gave Mrs. Shelby two excellent motives against Taylor—(1) jealousy, and (2) anger against a man who might sully her daughter's reputation and smash her cinema popularity. But theories are wonderful things—in theory—and this line of investigation fizzled. Mrs. Shelby said all this fuss was "absurd," and Mary Miles Minter soon dropped the lawsuit against her mother.

Investigators later discovered that the much-publicized pink nightgown had disappeared from the district attorney's office. There are wisecracks who say that District Attorney Woolwine was on friendly terms with the woman who owned the silken garment. Woolwine, who has since died, cannot reply to this innuendo, but at least it seems that he was a little careless with the evidence.

All through this astonishing investigation, which was conducted with considerable skill, the officials were subjected to powerful pressures by people with plenty of money and influence. A billion-dollar industry was doing its best to see that the murder of one man should not ruin it. Movie magnates, with large stakes in some of the stars involved, fought against allowing the case to become what they termed "a smear on Hollywood." Actresses questioned were surrounded by high-powered attorneys to safeguard their rights, and were supplied with foxy publicity men to make them say the right things in the right words to create the right effect on the movie-going public.

The investigators realized that most, if not all, of the women questioned were innocent of the murder though they might have been guilty of indiscretions, and some such soft-hearted feeling might have accounted for the disappearance of that fascinating nightgown.

Not The Same Man

Only one development of any importance has taken place since. Through a careful comparison of old photographs, it has been pretty well established that the butler, Sands, and Dennis Deane-Taylor were not the same man. Neither of them has ever been found.

So absorbing was the Taylor mystery that some of the detectives continued to work on it on their own time long after the case had been shoved into the "Unsolved" file. Some of them "cleared up" the riddle in their own minds, pinning the crime on several different persons. Here are statements made by two who were prominent in the probe:

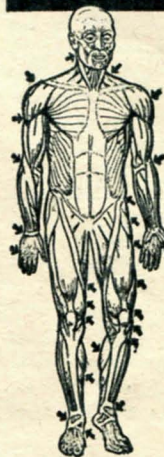
"I know who committed the murder," said Detective King in 1935. "A woman killed Taylor, but she is shrewd and cunning and we have never been able to prove our case against her."

"It is my opinion that Edward Sands fired the murder bullet," said Captain Winn. "Such a reckless act would seem to fit well into the character of the man who, we believe, brazenly pawned stolen gems using their owner's concealed name."

Take your choice. Though the case is still officially open, after 29 years the slayer may have carried the secret to the grave and it seems dubious that it will ever be solved. If by some miracle it should be, it will drive Truman, Stalin and MacArthur right off the front pages.

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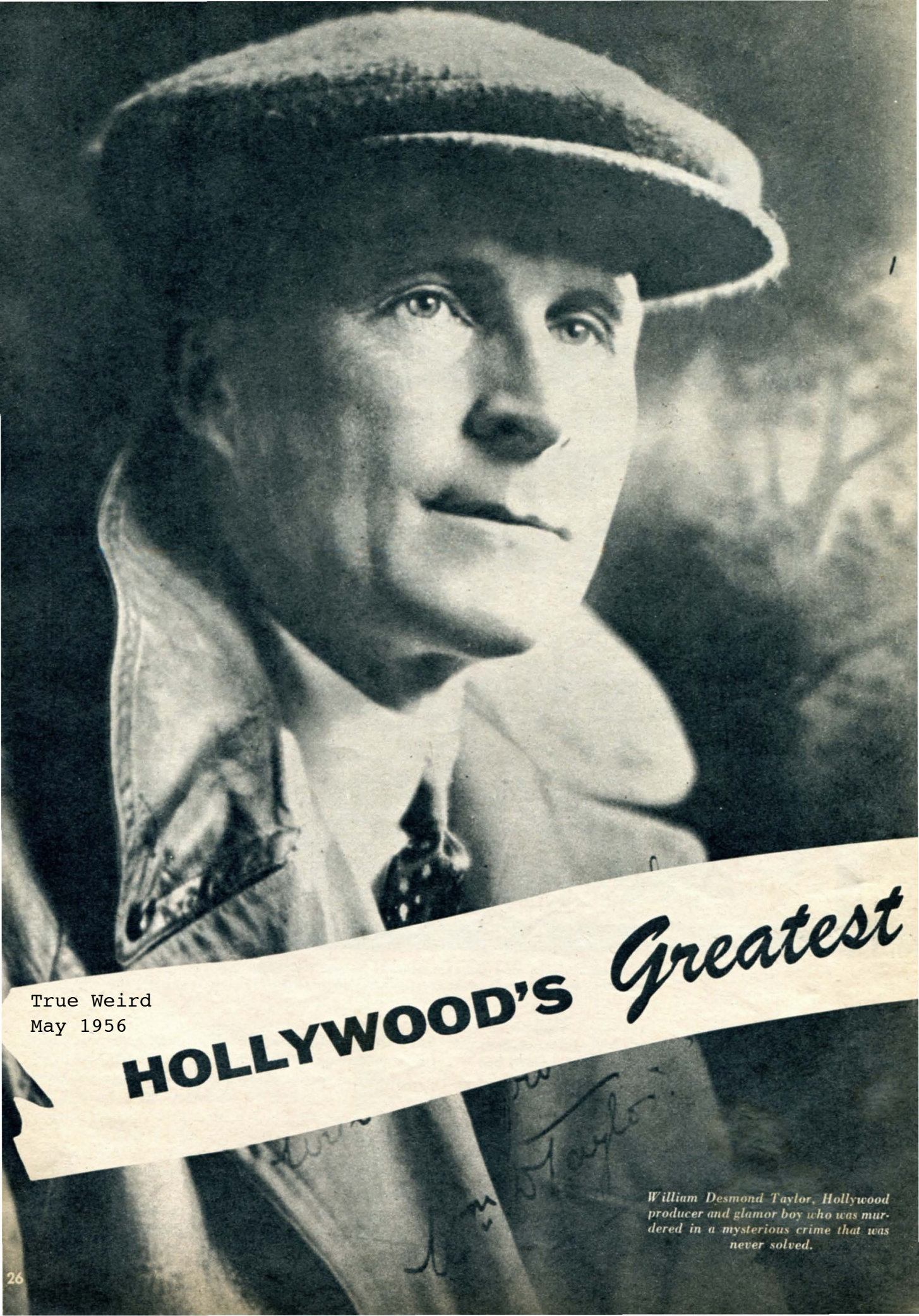
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True Weird
May 1956

HOLLYWOOD'S *Greatest*

William Desmond Taylor, Hollywood producer and glamor boy who was murdered in a mysterious crime that was never solved.

William Desmond Taylor



A hand never identified shot the playboy in the back and (right) Mabel Normand, the great comedienne, whose career was wrecked by the scandal in which she was involved.

WEIRD MURDER MYSTERY

More fantastic and incredible than anything screen writers would dare invent is the murder of William Desmond Taylor, maker of movie stars, who was killed in a crime no one could solve.

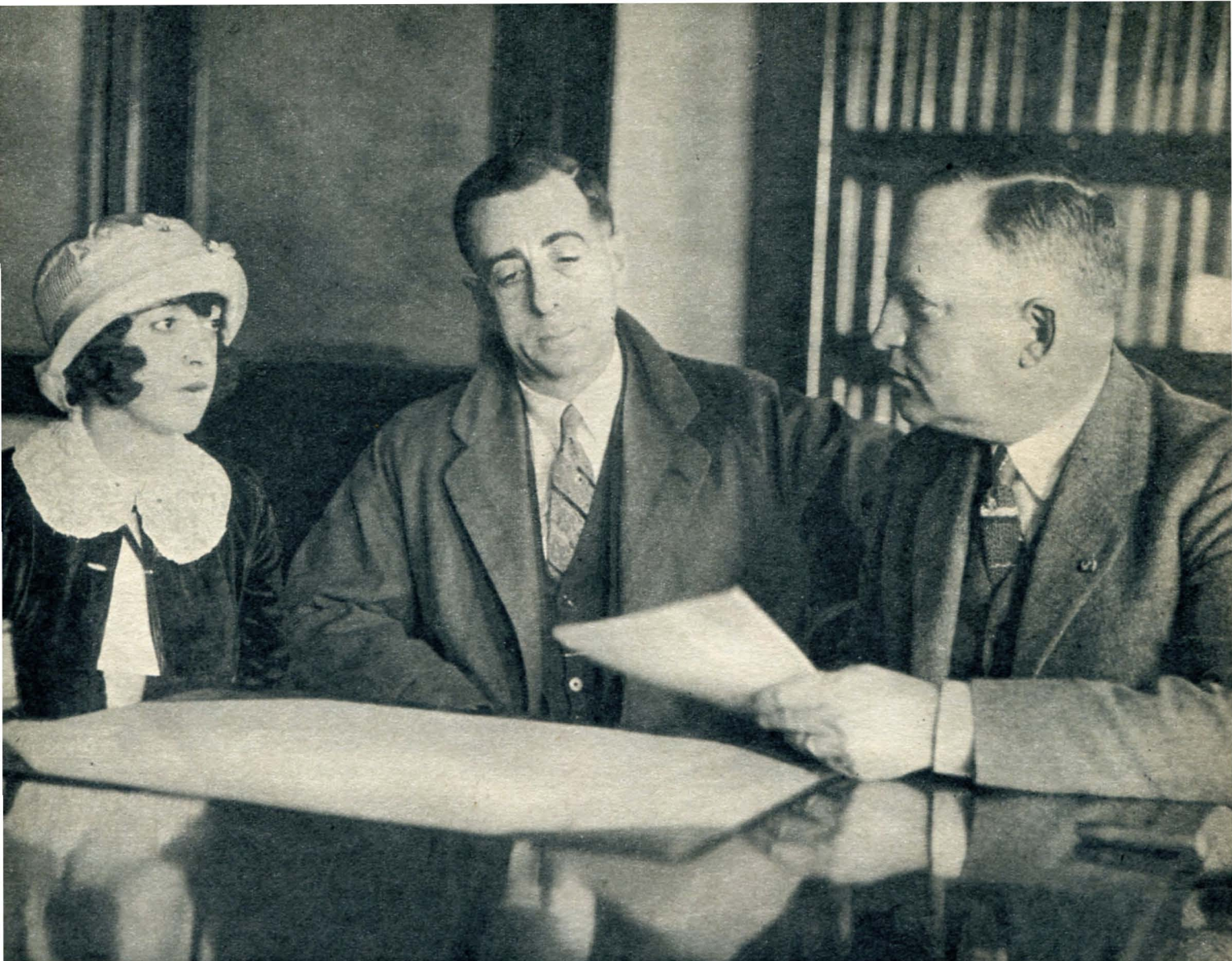
BY LESLIE LIPPENCOTT

THE sharp report of a pistol shot in a glamorous Hollywood home around eight o'clock on the evening of February 1, 1922 raised the curtain on one of the most bizarre murder mysteries in the annals of American crime. If a writer had offered any Hollywood studio a scenario based on the facts uncovered by the police investigation, the scenario would have been turned down as too fantastic for belief!

Yet, that is precisely the kind of weird improbabilities

which kept turning up when the investigation began into the murder of handsome William Desmond Taylor, then one of the glamor city's most famous directors, who was killed by a shot in the back.

Who murdered him was never discovered but who, after he was killed, straightened out the corpse and smoothed his clothes before vanishing into the night intrigued the world, it sometimes seemed, even more than the identity of the killer; and it was pretty definitely accepted that the killer



Mabel Normand, film star, being quizzed after Taylor's mysterious murder.

Edward Sands who injected a weird note in the fantastic case when he vanished.

Photo of the murdered man showing another phase of his fantastic hidden career.



HOLLYWOOD'S GREATEST TRUE WEIRD MURDER MYSTERY

did not do it.

The facts, as they were gradually uncovered turned the spotlight on the make-believe capital of the world and the almost incredible lives that were led by some of the glamor boys and girls, the dope addicts who preyed on them, the lush love affairs of famous actresses. It was a mad kaleidoscope of sin, sex and crime, greater than the celluloid would have dared portray.

The murder occurred in the silent days of the screen, when American housewives were beginning to understand what psychologists now call the "dream life" which keeps them contented. Never in American history had so many women literally palpitated with breathless excitement when the screen's great romantic lover, Rudolph Valentino, flashed across their view. Valentino was the housemaid's dream come true and Mary Pickford was America's dream girl.

Among the great stars of that day were two world famous actresses, Mabel Normand, America's best loved comedienne and Mary Miles Minter; not yet 18 and the world's model for everything pure in American womanhood. These two were so closely interwoven in the life of the murdered film director that their careers were wrecked. Mabel Normand died some years later and Mary Miles Minter changed her name and vanished from view.

In any murder case which has an element of mystery involved detectives first look for a motive. Only persons torn by the furies of hate, vengeance, jealousy or powerful other emotions commit a crime which could bring about their own death. In the Taylor case there were enough motives to involve a dozen persons.

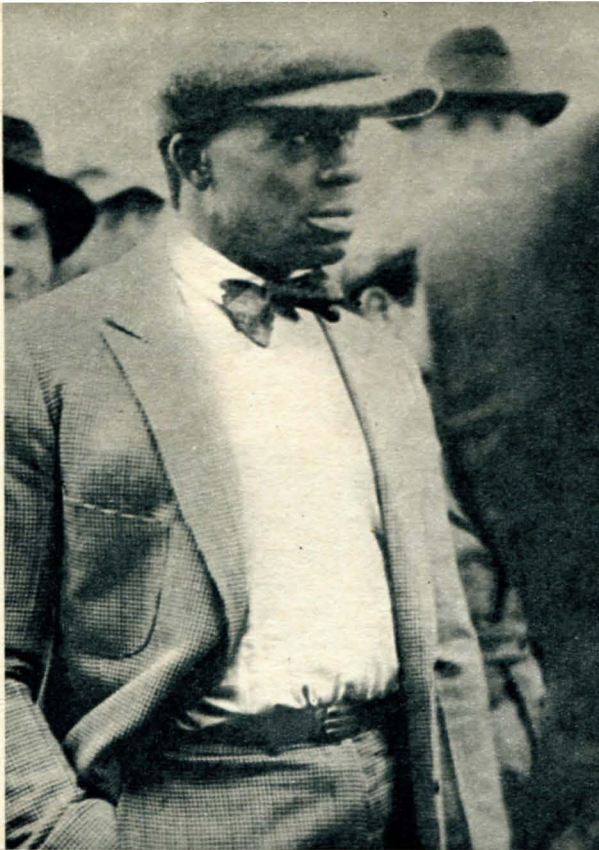
The first of the almost incredible facts turned up in the murder investigation was that William Desmond Taylor was not William Desmond Taylor but a wife deserter named William Cunningham Deane-Tanner, a ne'er-do-well whose family packed him off to America from England to get rid of him. This was the first of the series of weird facts uncovered by the police as they delved into the murder mystery.

Taylor was one of the most popular "bachelors" in Hollywood. He was born, it was established in Ireland, the son of a fairly well to do British Army officer. The boy could not follow a military career because of poor eyesight and was not interested in it, anyway. He wanted to be an actor. Fed up with the boy's dreams of the stage the father got him a ranch in America and shipped him off.

The police established that Taylor or, as he was still known then, Deane-Tanner, made out like a cowboy for



Mary Miles Minter, another glamorous movie star who was grilled as a key figure in the never solved murder of the glamor boy.



Henry Peavey, the murdered man's chauffeur, who testified that Sands had forged Taylor's name to checks.

HOLLYWOOD'S GREATEST TRUE

a couple of years before he concluded he was not cut out for the rough life of a range rider. Besides, he wanted to be an actor. Despite his dream of the stage and glamor he apparently suppressed them and became a staid and respectable citizen. He returned to New York, married a conservative broker's daughter, established a home in conservative and very respectable Larchmont, N. Y., and opened an expensive antique shop. He fathered a girl whom they named Ethel. At 31 Deane-Tanner seemed to have finished sowing his oats. He owned a good piece of property in the antique shop, earned a very good living and was to all appearances a reputable, solid citizen—the kind who is a credit to his community.

On October 23, 1908 Deane-Tanner left his antique shop for lunch and vanished from sight. As Deane-Tanner he was never seen again. As the reader probably suspects by now Deane-Tanner, the wife and child deserter



WEIRD MURDER MYSTERY

who threw over a life of security, respectability and a very good living, was none other than William Desmond Taylor.

In its own way what Taylor did is practically what Somerset Maugham wrote about in "Moon and Sixpence", one of his most touching and popular novels and which was based on the life of the great painter Paul Gauguin. In the Maugham tale the painter, a respectable broker, after suppressing his desires to be an artist finally throws away his respectable life and deserts his wife and family to paint. Taylor had obviously suppressed his own desire to be an actor and finally gave in to it at the cost of a broken home and infinite heartache. He walked out of his wife's life without so much as a note of apology. She never heard of him again and assumed that he was dead. Not until after his murder and the police discovered his real identity and informed her did she and her daughter go to the movies

to see the famous actor and director and when he blazed across the screen as a dashing, handsome young love she recognized him as her missing husband.

One of the men questioned by the police was the director's "man" Henry Peavey who found the murdered man's body. Peavey slept out and when he walked into the house on the morning after the murder and found his employer dead, laid out as if asleep or resting, his clothes neatly arranged, the servant's screams aroused the neighborhood where a number of Hollywood luminaries lived. With the police came reporters, photographers and friends of the director. Taylor was a famous name in the movie colony and his murder was front page news. From Peavey they learned of a mysterious figure in the director's life, a former valet and chauffeur known as George F. Sands, and when the police probed into this man's life they developed another angle as weird as the Deane-Tanner aspect.

(Continued on page 67)



Edna Purviance, who was not directly involved in the crime, sailing for Europe to get away from it all.



The murdered man and Mary Miles Minter who claimed they were engaged to be married when he was murdered.

Edna Purviance, Charlie Chaplin's leading lady, being questioned by Hollywood's district attorney.

Hollywood's Greatest True Weird Murder Mystery

(Continued from page 30)



Sands was known as Taylor's man Friday and was a taciturn, close mouthed, unpleasant sort of person who would normally have been fired by any employer just for general disagreeableness. Yet, instead of firing him Sands was almost contemptuously familiar with his employer and Taylor took it all without complaint. Everyone who visited the famous director and saw the relationship between the two felt that Sands had something on Taylor or the latter would not have tolerated such behavior.

Not long before Taylor was murdered he had gone on a trip to Europe and while he was away Sands forged the director's name to numerous checks for all sorts of large sums, stole the director's clothing and other valuables and sold or pawned them and just before Taylor returned, vanished as completely as the antique dealer in New York had vanished. When Taylor realized he had been robbed when he got the cancelled checks, Peavey suggested that the police be called. Taylor refused.

One day, Peavey told the police, he walked into Taylor's bedroom which he sometimes used as an office for personal affairs and saw a pile of more forged checks.

"That man," Taylor muttered to Peavey, pointing to the forgeries. "That man."

"Why not send out an alarm?" Peavey suggested again.

Taylor shook his head. "It would do no good," he said.

Naturally, with that sort of background the police promptly began a search not only for Sands but into his background and the trail uncovered another weird aspect to this murder. It led to the murdered man's younger brother, Dennis.

Dennis, too, had left his paternal Ireland and come to America. So far as the police could establish, Dennis got a job in a Fifth Avenue shop in New York, met and married an American girl and had two children by her. So far as anyone

could tell the couple were very much in love, contented and devoted to each other.

Yet—as though it were a replica of an earlier event—one day in 1912 Dennis walked out of his shop and vanished from the face of the earth. No one ever saw him again—at least as Dennis Deane-Tanner. His wife and two children were left to shift for themselves.

At about the time Dennis vanished, the police established, a man giving his name as George F. Sands appeared in Hollywood and immediately became friendly with the rising actor William Desmond Taylor. Years later, after Taylor had been murdered, the police dug up a picture of Dennis and found a remarkable resemblance between the missing brother and the "valet and chauffeur." Though it was never established definitely that Sands and Dennis Deane-Tanner were the same the police ultimately concluded that the relationship between the two was the real reason the director would not prosecute the man who forged his name for considerable sums.

So far, in true Hollywood style, the suspense of Who-Done-It and the list of suspects keep building up to the lone shot which gave the police a real case much more complicated than those devised by scenario writers.

The movie capital of the world in the roaring Twenties, when alcohol and recklessness swept the country in a post World War I reaction, was invaded by dope peddlers. They attached themselves like leeches to those commanding huge salaries. Heroin, cocaine and opium found the movie colony a fertile customer. Hollywood paid its performers fabulous salaries and there was money to be made from them if they could be made to become addicts.

In the main most of the actors and actresses—idols of America—were not educated men and women. They did not have within themselves a means to enjoy life and looked to outside stimulants. It

was a reckless era anyway and many of the stars threw themselves into excessive drinking, debauchery and quite a number, took to drugs. Some of the most shining names in filmdom became pathetic addicts.

Taylor saw some of his close friends and, rumor said, sweethearts, fall prey to the drugs. There is some question whether his man Friday did not become an addict and forged his name to get money for drugs. None of these were ever established but it is known that Taylor, who was not a man to throw money away, spent over \$50,000 of his own cash to gather evidence against the drug peddlers in the film colony and turn that information over to federal narcotic agents.

This discovery opened another phase of who killed him for it would have paid the drug peddlers to hire a killer from out of town, if necessary, to get rid of this director who was privately financing an investigation which was giving the peddlers a headache. As in any good movie murder mystery there were now a number of different (and all good) motives sufficient to commit murder and a number of suspects.

There is the women with whom he was known to have been intimate and any one of whom in a fit of jealousy might have shot him. And having committed murder only a woman would have had the delicacy to straighten out the dead body and smooth out the rumpled clothes before she left. There was Sands, believed to be his brother, a thief and a forger and perhaps a drug addict who might have killed when Taylor threatened him. And, there was also the possibility that drug peddlers hired a paid killer. There were a dozen excellent motives and a dozen excellent suspects and some of the suspects became hysterical.

On the morning the murder was discovered two internationally famous movie stars close to the murdered man occupied the attention of the front pages.

The police quickly established that a world famous movie star was the last person known to have been with Taylor a few minutes before he was shot and concentrated on this aspect fruitlessly. as it turned out. The first one they hammered at was Mabel Normand, then the screen's most popular comedienne and in the course of the investigation established that on Wednesday afternoon on Feb. 1, 1922, the director telephoned her home. Mamie Owens, Miss Normand's maid, answered the phone.

"Miss Normand isn't in, Mr. Taylor," she said. "She's out shopping and said that she then planned to go see the new Harold Lloyd picture."

"Please tell her I called," said the director, "and that I have two books for her."

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I can deliver them if she wishes or she may pick them up at my house."

"Yes, sir, I will tell her."

Shortly after this Miss Normand called her home and the maid gave her Taylor's message.

"Oh," said Miss Normand, the maid later testified, "I guess I can pass up the picture until another time. I'll go there and pick up the books."

One of the odd things, which complicated the whole investigation is that despite the money, jewelry and other valuables in the house, Taylor never locked the doors of his home. It was one of the weird quirks which only served to add to the long list of possible killers for the police had to consider the possibility that an ordinary burglar had walked into the house through a never locked door and being caught, killed the director.

Mabel Normand told the police that on the evening before when she reached the director's home she did not ring the bell immediately because she heard him talking on the telephone. Being a woman and presumably close to the handsome director, she paused to eavesdrop—an indication of possible jealousy which could be a murder, the police felt. When Taylor hung up Miss Normand rang the bell. Taylor himself opened the door for her.

"We talked about the books," she told detectives, "and he asked me to stay for cocktails. I did."

This was verified by Peavey who had prepared the drinks, served them and left. This was about twenty minutes after seven in the evening. But—several people saw Mabel Normand leaving the director's with him escorting her to a cab. A few minutes after he saw her off Douglas MacLean and his wife, who lived nearby, heard a shot—a single shot, which was also heard by the MacLean maid. This was a few moments before eight.

Almost directly after that Mrs. MacLean saw a man walk out of the Taylor front door, look about casually and stroll away. He was a solidly built man and had a cap pulled over his eyes which concealed his face as efficiently as a mask but no one thought anything special about it. Under examination later, dealing with the manner of walking by the man Mrs. MacLean admitted it could have been a woman disguised as a man.

Obviously this was the killer but, since everyone thought the shot was the backfire of an automobile, no one bothered even to remember the clothes he wore. Not until the following morning when they heard Peavey's screams did they connect the backfire and the murder shot.

But—there was not enough time between the firing of the shot and the appearance of the "solidly built man" for him to have straightened out the corpse

and smoothed his clothes! It was clear, then, that someone else did that and it looked like a woman's touch. But who?

Was there a woman concealed in the house who witnessed the murder? Or did a woman walk into the Taylor home later on in the evening and finding the man about town dead straightened out the corpse and left quietly, fearful lest anyone discover her presence?

From the moment the body was discovered America and its doting movie fans were presented with a nine ringed circus.

Edna Purviance, who was Charlie Chaplin's leading lady for many years and who lived in a house where she could see who came and left the Taylor residence, knew that the director was exceedingly friendly with Mabel Normand with whom he was said to be in love and at the same time also exceedingly friendly with a star named Mary Miles Minter who was under age and said to be in love with the director.

When she heard what had happened Edna Purviance immediately called Mabel Normand and told her the director's house was swarming with police, reporters, photographers and just the curious because Taylor had been found murdered. According to Miss Purviance Miss Normand sounded stunned but said nothing. The second call Miss Purviance made was to Mary Miles Minter who went into hysterics. By then the police, swarming over the place, had found a couple of pure silk pink nightgowns with the initials M.M.M. embroidered on each.

It was common knowledge around the movie colony that the teen-age Miss Minter was in love with the 45-year-old director and that her mother desperately opposed their seeing each other. And here again the police had another suspect, for a mother will sometimes go to extremes to protect her child against what she may think is a wolf.

Mary Miles Minter, when given the news that Taylor had been murdered, went berserk. Despite anything her mother could do the child star rushed to the director's house and literally clawed her way through the milling crowd to where he lay dead. When she got over her hysteria she said that she and the director had been secretly engaged and would have been married, despite her mother's objections, when the girl reached 18.

That the handsome wife deserter had apparently been having an affair with America's idol of pure womanhood shocked the country and wrecked the star's career. Detectives also pounded away at Mabel Normand and eventually between their insistent questioning and the notoriety she found no studio wanting to hire her. Eight years later she died

in a sanatorium of tuberculosis. Miss Minter vanished from the scene.

The director was buried amid a Hollywood fanfare of publicity and no indication of what was really behind its own complicated and weird murder mystery.

To where did the close-mouthed Sands disappear after he forged Taylor's checks and stole Taylor's clothing, and why did Sands—if it were Sands—tip the police off that Taylor's real name was Deane-Tanner? For one of the inexplicable things thrown into the pot of this case was that after the body had been found a letter came addressed to Taylor. Police opened it and inside found pawn tickets

for the things that had been stolen by Sands! And the pawn tickets were made in the name of William Deane-Tanner!—a name no one was supposed to know.

Who really killed Taylor? Who among the dozen good suspects fired the fatal shot—or was it someone who never even came into the picture as a suspect? All of them had good motives—or was there a motive that never even came into the picture? The police do not know and neither does Hollywood but what is known is that Hollywood still has on its hands an unsolved mystery more weird than any it ever put on celluloid.

When All Holland Went Mad

(Continued from page 38)



savings and fortunes for a tulip. The more rare or fine the color, the greater the sum paid. Bidding was so widespread even in country villages that a set-up had to be arranged something like the New York Stock Exchange with specifications of how deals should be handled.

The Tulipomania began not as a gamble for money but as a means to show one another rare flowers for impressions. The more beautiful, delicate and rare the flower, the greater the impression and everyone seemed to want to impress his neighbor. Rich men gave half their wealth for one tulip!

One of the fantastic incidents which came down from that period of mass madness was the arrest and long imprisonment of an innocent sailor who brought good news to a famous merchant. The wealthy importer and exporter who dealt in silks and satins was even more proud of his rare collection of tulips than of the rich consignment of goods he received periodically from the far east. When one particularly rich shipload of material arrived which would make him even richer than he was, news of its arrival was brought by a sailor off the ship.

The importer was so delighted with the news that he gave the sailor a gift

of a herring—which was a terrific “tip” in those days. The sailor was glad to get it, having eaten the slop ships fed their crews in those days. He saw what looked like an onion lying on the counter and herring and onion is a famous combination. The sailor further assumed that an onion certainly did not belong on a counter heaped with silks and velvets and slipped the “onion” into his pocket to eat with the gift.

The seaman no sooner left the warehouse for the docks where he could eat his herring and onion in peace when the merchant missed the bulb of a rare *Semper Augustus*, worth about 3,000 florins or something like \$1,500 in American money. (The reader should bear in mind that the value of a florin in today's dollar purchasing value would be at least ten times greater in that period or a value placed on the bulb of some \$15,000. Some historians estimate the value in dollars today at around \$30,000.)

The merchant bellowed for his missing bulb but there was no sign of it. Someone finally wondered if the sailor might not have stolen it. By then the merchant was a little mad, not only at the thought of losing a fortune but at losing his precious bulb. He rushed toward the docks followed by servants and employees in

the warehouse.

The sailor had no idea of the value of the “onion” he had taken. He had not thought he took anything of value for onions were not expensive. With an easy conscience he wandered around leisurely, looking for a comfortable coil of rope as a seat so he could get to work munching the herring and the pilfered “onion”. Sitting thus in the sun he cut the “onion” in quarters and bit into it, thinking it was a very mild one. He was eating it with relish when the excited merchant and his retinue found him, chewing away.

“Did you take a bulb off my counter?” the red-faced trader screamed as soon as he caught sight of the sailor.

“Yes, sir,” the sailor admitted, wondering what all the excitement was about. “I didn’t know it was a bulb, sir. I took only an onion lying on the counter. I did not think you would mind or even miss it. Onions are cheap and you were so kind as to give me the herring—and with the—”

The now frightened sailor's explanation was interrupted by a loud cry:

“Where is it? What did you do with it?”

“I ate it,” said the sailor, pointing to his mouth as he swallowed the last morsel.

“Ate it!” shrieked the merchant. “You ate it!”

“It was only an onion,” said the sailor—“and a very mild one at that.”

“Call the police,” the merchant shrieked, striking his own head with the palm of his hand in agony. His face turned purple and pointing to the bewildered sailor, he yelled, “Seize him! Don’t let him escape!”

The merchant's employees fell on the sailor and tied him hand and foot. Others ran off to call the police. The sailor was thrown in jail and kept there for months, still not understanding what all the excitement was about, especially over a mild onion. Not until months had passed did the merchant calm down enough to be sensible about the whole affair. Keeping the sailor in prison for the rest of his life would not bring back the “onion” as the sailor persisted in calling it, and he withdrew his charges and the unhappy prisoner was set free.

“He ate it,” wailed the merchant to the world in general when he appeared with the request that the police free the unfortunate sailor. “He ate it! Why, for the cost of that bulb the entire ship's crew could have eaten and drunk themselves insensible for years! For the cost of what he calls a tasteless onion the Prince of Orange could have feasted his entire court in a banquet that would be long remembered. And he ate it! He ate my *Semper Augustus*!”

The sailor signed on the first ship that

Bold

December 1957

TAYLOR- MADE MURDER



Who shot the film Lothario's final scene?

PEBBLES crunched on the bungalow driveway as the Pierce-Arrow touring car came to a stop. A darkly clad figure moved briskly from the house to the waiting vehicle. She slammed the door and the car screeched off. Neighbors, used to seeing women leave the movie director's luxury bungalow, didn't blink an eye. It happened all the time.

William Desmond Taylor's hired man opened the door to his employer's study the next morning. He found Taylor dead, a bullet in his heart. The date was Feb. 2, 1922. Thus began one of Hollywood's most famous — and still unsolved — murder cases. It involved some of the film colony's biggest names and shattered two brilliant careers.

Before his death, William Desmond Taylor was a \$100,000-a-year director at Famous Players-Lasky Studios. He was quite a man with the ladies. Whether this was his undoing, even time may never tell. At any rate, baffled police started with the director's girl



William Desmond Taylor's murder shocked Hollywood. Mabel Normand (center) and Mary Miles Minter (r.) both questioned by police in mysterious slaying, had careers ruined by his death.

friends. Mary Pickford's name came up first: her photo occupied a key spot in the bachelor's apartment. She knew nothing about the murder.

Mabel Normand, the heroine of numerous Mack Sennett comedies, turned out to be the woman in the touring car. She admitted having spent two hours with the director before leaving in her car. They talked business, French lessons and Freud, she told police, and then she left. Her career was ruined. Mary Miles Minter, a big hit in Charlie Chaplin pictures was grilled next. Police had uncovered one of her love letters. It sizzled. "I love him deeply," she eagerly explained. Miss Minter's career went up in flames.

Dark suspicions filled scandal-hungry tabloids for months: talk of jealous lovers, blackmail, narcotics-pushers, vindictive valets. In the end, Hollywood was left nursing its battered good name and the police had a spectacular unsolved crime. Real-life is often stranger than scenario.

END



The Victim

A filmy pink nightie
in the bedroom of a
movie director; torrid
love letters tucked
in a hide-a-way; a
bevy of top box-office
glamor girls; and
a body on the floor!
These were the things
that had Hollywood
fighting for its life!

THE DAY

THE MOVIES

ALMOST FOLDED

BY JACK YARROW



Mabel Normand

CAST OF CHARACTERS



Neva Gerber



Blanche Sweet



Mary Miles Minter



Gloria Swanson

UNTIL the advent of the Era of the Psychiatric Couch, which followed hard on the heels of World War II, American movies were regarded as a hallowed institution. Its practitioners, male and female alike, were supposedly people apart, not unwilling to rub elbows with the common herd but always remembering they were sacred cows, or a reasonable facsimile.

When it was discovered that the id as well as the ego could be blamed for outrageous behavior, the glamor boys and girls of Hollywood really let the bars down. Things began to happen; things like a famous "sweet" star leaving husband and child to run off with a foreign movie director; another movie queen openly flaunting her illicit romance all over Europe; a much-married male star flagrantly cutting up touches with a Parisian beauty, who had once been the mistress of royalty. Few fingers were pointed at these prurient escapades. "After all," reasoned a good many people. "They're merely expressing themselves. Just as my psychiatrist says I should."

In all this welter of wantonness, made possible by the steady clink of cash into film box-offices (the result of an invention that made people move on a screen) no one seemed to realize how close these transgressors had once come to not being movie stars because there might have been no movies!

Yes, this strangest of paradoxes came dangerously near to happening, for, despite the invention of the movie camera, there was a day when it looked like outraged public indignation would demand an investigation of an infant industry which, according to its critics "bred immorality."

Such was the temper of America at large back in 1922 when, a brief time after headlines shrieked a repellent scandal involving Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle, then the film's foremost comedian, and a showgirl,

an even more sordid story reached the breakfast tables—the murder of a famed movie director and the uncovering of his stable of actress sweeties!

To understand the furor that followed this revelation, you've got to know the temper of the times. Psychiatry was in its infancy. Morals then were synonymous with good manners. In the world of the magic lantern, a fiction had been created that its men and women were above reproach. They had, frankly, the status of earth-bound gods and goddesses. They could do no wrong because they always did right. Realizing this, producers maintained the fiction and woe, betide the luckless character who even married until the public's love affair with him or her had run its course. As for scandal—well, Arbuckle was kicked out of movies, held up as a horrible example never again to be emulated, and the quivering producers breathed easier.

But not for long! Because, on the morning of February 2, 1922, newspapers screamed the story of the discovery of the body of a handsome, 45-year-old movie director, the evening before. His name was William Desmond Taylor. He was found dead on the floor of his study, shot in the back by a person or persons unknown. Taylor was a bachelor, yet police found in his bedroom a dainty pink nightie, the ownership of which was never ascertained.

William Desmond Taylor was lying in a pool of blood beside the desk in his study when Henry Peavey, a Negro servant, arrived for his work as daytime butler on the morning of February 3rd. A chair was overturned and there was \$78 in Taylor's wallet. Besides the filmy negligee found in an upstairs bedroom of Taylor's love nest in Bungalow Court and the evidence of cocktails for two in the dining room, police also found an undischarged .32-cal. revolver in Taylor's (Continued on page 64)

squirrel on the run and didn't hardly breathe until I stepped into my room. "Oh, Rube! Sweet and ever lovin' Rube!"

She startled me so bad I couldn't hardly move. The books dropped out of my hand and I went slack-jawed.

"You're in my bed there, Mae Ann," I said.

She didn't answer, but just grinned. I knew it right then and I said to myself, Calvin Hipple, there lies trouble. I figured that the poor girl must have been taken sudden with an attack of the hookers.

"Are you sick, Mae Ann?" I asked.

"Dying, Rube! Just dying!"

"Where does it hurt, Mae Ann?"

"Here, Rube. Here! Here!"

"There!?"

"Here!"

"ENOUGH OF THAT!" Mrs. Henny came charging into the room like a bellowing bull. "I told you to leave that boy alone!" Mrs. Henny shouted. She was whacking away at Mae Ann and the girl was squealing and trying to get away.

"I weren't hurtin' him!"

"Damn your hide, I told you to keep away from him!" She was chasing back and forth around that bed whacking at

Mae Ann. "Now get your things and clear out of this house! A nice decent schoolboy and you can't keep away! You hear me? I said to clear out!"

"No, M'am," I shouted. "You can't do a thing like that." I already had my suitcase out and was throwing my clothes in.

"Now, now, Honey, Mrs. Henny said to me, her voice soft and friendly. "You just stay where you are and I'll send this baggage on her way."

"You can't do that, M'am," I said, cinching up the suitcase. "Blood is thicker than water."

"What's that?"

I come up straight like they showed us how in the scouts. "I'll go, M'am," I said. "I'm mighty grateful for the way you feel, but she's one of your girls, one of your own." I got out through the doorway, down the stairs and out onto the street. I sure hated to leave that nice room and the next place wasn't nearly as good. But I'm no troublemaker and I sure wasn't gonna break up that nice friendly home. That wouldn't of been right.



THE DAY THE MOVIES ALMOST FOLDED

(Continued from page 53)

dresser drawer as well as valuable jewelry, none of which had been touched.

They also discovered that a lush and petite brunette movie comedienne, Mable Normand, had visited Bill Taylor on the night of the murder. She later insisted that her 7-year relationship with him was based on "comradeship and understanding." Butler Peavey told a conflicting story. He implied that the relationship was more boudoirish than bookish. He also testified that he had left them drinking alone together at 7:15 p.m., a time that was only 45 minutes away from the murder.

Mabel testified that she had left Taylor's bungalow early in the evening and that he had accompanied her to her limousine, a story corroborated by her chauffeur. He also noticed that Taylor had left the door of his bungalow open when he came out with Mabel at about 7:40 p.m. On top of that Taylor's own chauffeur knocked on his employer's door for the next day's instructions about five minutes later, or 7:45 p.m., and got no answer after repeated knockings, although the bungalow's lights were on.

To thicken the plot further it was revealed that bales of love letters had also been turned up in the hide-away bungalow. Not only had a batch of purple epistles from Mabel Normand been discovered, but packets and packets from other delightful dolls of the silent screen. Among them were some from Blanche Sweet and Gloria Swanson. Particularly passionate were

those from a popular young ingenue, 19-year-old Mary Miles Minter, the demure and girlish type (at least on the screen). One of her scented notes read:

"Dearest, I love you! I love you! I love you! XXX XXX XXX X, Yours always, Mary"

Her more intimate letters were written in a schoolgirlish code which the police had no trouble deciphering but which "nice people" had difficulty swallowing.

On the morning after the murder Mary Miles Minter rushed to Taylor's home and tearfully screamed that she and the man 26 years her senior were secretly engaged.

More shocks were to follow. It was revealed in the next few days that Taylor's love life included still another "engagement" to an actress named Neva Gerber, a sultry femme fatale whom his other loves apparently knew nothing about. Nor did they know that Neva had been receiving money and gifts from Taylor, including a fancy car and, only three weeks before the murder, a check for \$500.

Who was this strange man, William Desmond Taylor, who turned up suddenly in Hollywood in 1912 and a few years later turned it upside down? Naturally the police got bloodhounds on his trail. Then it developed that Bill Taylor had been leading a double life, inside a triangle, and that he was originally one William Cunningham Deane-Tanner of Dublin who had, on his emigration to America, married a

Floradora girl, Ethel May Harrison, and had been a successful dealer in antiques in New York.

All of a sudden, police learned, William Cunningham Deane-Tanner, alias William Desmond Taylor, disappeared in 1908, without explanation, leaving a charming wife, a charming salary, and a charming home in Westchester. Mrs. Deane-Tanner said that his sudden disappearance "was just like a man picking up his hat and leaving the house." But he had generously provided for her and his daughter, and the only explanation Mrs. Deane-Tanner could offer was that he suffered from lapses of memory.

Again the plot thickens. The famous murdered movie director had a social secretary and close confidant by the name of Edward F. Sands, who, like his employer, was considered quite a hunk of man by the gals.

Sands had been left in charge of Taylor's household when the director had made a trip to England in 1921. While Taylor was gone, Sands disappeared along with money, jewelry, clothing and a car. On Taylor's return from England, a year before his murder, he swore out a warrant for the arrest of Sands. However, two months before Taylor's passionate heart was stopped by a .38-cal. slug, a second theft of jewelry had occurred and was also attributed to Edward F. Sands, still missing to this day. Significantly, the pawn tickets were anonymously returned, for the jewelry of the second theft.

Just to complicate matters, it was revealed that Taylor had gone to Federal narcotic officers in a fight on a dope ring that was bleeding one of his favorite actresses at the rate of \$2000 a month for junk.

Every trail lead nowhere, all leads wound up in a blind alley. The only thing harassed police were sure of was that Taylor was dead.

Taylor spent, according to the D.A., \$50,000 a year on women, in a day when a dollar brought value. The disclosure of such profligate spending added fuel to the growing fires of outraged moral indignation. Indignant church and civic groups clamored for a clean-up; others heatedly cried for the doing away of Hollywood. "Must our children learn of these shocking things?" wired a furious mother from Dubuque. "I'd sooner see movies banned."

Engulfed in these waves of moral protests, producers spent many sleepless months wondering whether these threats to their livelihood would be carried out. Herculean efforts were made to suppress the least smidgeon of scandal and, at last, the furor petered out. The movies were safe, the positions of its stars secured, and the time desperately needed for the magic lantern to fulfill its destiny was gained.

